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THE BUDDHIST CONCEPTION OF OMNISCIENCE

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

As its central purpose, the thesis outlines the Buddhist conception of human omniscience as developed by the philosophers of later Vijnānavāda Buddhism, i.e., Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. It attempts to show how those philosophers dialectically established the possibility of human omniscience and the omniscience of the Buddha.

The concept of human omniscience was introduced into Indian philosophy because of the religious controversies between Heterodox (Nāstika) schools, such as Jainism and Buddhism, and Orthodox (Āstika) schools, especially Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta. The Mīmāṁsakas began the argument with claims for the omniscience of the Vedas; the Naiyāyikas followed with the attribution of omniscience to God. When the Buddhists, in turn, maintained the omniscience of the Buddha, the Mīmāṁsakas raised objections to the concept of human omniscience, the omniscience of the Buddha, of God, and of any human religious teacher.

In order to refute these objections and to assert once again the superiority of the Buddha and his teachings of Dharma, the later Buddhist philosophers sought to dialectically established the concept of human omniscience. The Buddhist argument was the product of constant interaction and debate with other Indian religious and philosophical schools, and it is clear that omniscience was and continues to be one of the pivotal topics for all schools of Indian philosophy. The Buddhists have used logical arguments to support the concept of human omniscience. They have established the omniscience of the Buddha using the logical methods of presumption and inference. They have provided the answers from the Buddhist point of view to the Mīmāṁsakas' objections against the concepts of human omniscience and the omniscience of the Buddha. The Buddhists maintain that an omniscient person perceives all objects of the world simultaneously in a single cognitive moment. They have also argued that only an omniscient person can teach Dharma. The aim of the Buddhists was to prove the superiority of Buddhism among all religions, because it is based on the teachings of an omniscient being.

In brief, this thesis outlines the development of the concept of omniscience, which the Buddhists hold to be the necessary and sufficient condition for perception of supersensuous truths such as Dharma.

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The substance of this dissertation consists of an examination in greater depth and more extensive scope of a topic which was examined in a preliminary way in the writer's M.A. thesis, The Buddha as an Omniscient Religious Teacher; that thesis was submitted to the Department of Religion, McMaster University, and accepted in 1969.

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INTRODUCTION

In broad terms the purpose of this thesis is to present the logical proofs given in support of the omniscience (Sarvajnatā) of the Buddha by the later Buddhist philosophers: Dharmakīrti, Prajnākaragupta Śāntaraksita and Kamalaśīla. These philosophers lived after the fifth century A.D. and their writings represent the last phase of Indian Vijñānavāda Buddhism.

In Indian philosophy, logical argument was a commonly accepted method used to defend a religio-philosophical concept already accepted at the time. With this intention, the above named exponents of Buddhism have set forth logical evidence in order to establish the fact "that only the Buddha was an omniscient (Sarvajña) religious teacher". Undoubtedly religious practices implying omniscience precede their actual conceptualization: but the concern here is not with the realization of omniscience, but with its rationalization.

The main concern of this thesis will be to show that the Vijñānavādī Buddhist philosophers offer arguments that successfully answer the objections urged by the Mīmāṁsakas against the conception of human omniscience. In addition, we will also try to show that these Buddhist philosophers offer further arguments which establish the complete validity of this fundamental Buddhist tenet. Here they are not only philosophers or logicians but they are theologians defending the Buddhist tenets. In fact, the concept of omniscience is not only a philosophical and religious problem but also a theological problem.

The aim of these Buddhist philosophers is to prove the superiority of Buddhism among all religions, because it is based on the teachings of an omniscient teacher, that is, the Buddha, who is the only omniscient religious teacher according to them. By dialectical establishment of human omniscience and omniscience of the Buddha, these authors prove the authority and infa-libility of the Buddha and his teachings or Dharma.

The Sanskrit word Sarvajña (Sarva meaning "all" and jña meaning "knower") is translated by the English as "omniscient" or "all-knowing" person. Here "Sarva" means all the existing things of the past, present and future. Thus, one who knows all the things of the universe either successively or simultaneously is called omniscient (Sarvajña). The Sanskrit words Sarvajña, Sarvasarvajña, Sarvākārajña, Sarvākāragrāhi, Sarvavit, Sarvasarvavit, Sarvavedī, Visvavedas, Visvavidvān, Visvacakṣu, Visvadraṣṭā are used as synonyms, meaning a person who knows everything. According to Pāṇinīya Sanskrit grammar, he who knows everything is omniscient (Sarvajña).[1] The Pāli word Sabbannū and the Prākṛta word Kevalin are used for the omniscient person. In both Pāli and Prākṛta grammar, the meaning of the words Sabbannu and Kevalin, respectively, is similar to that of Pāṇinīya Sanskrit grammar.

The Sanskrit word Sarvajñatā, the Pāli word Sabbannuta-nāna and the Prākṛta word Kevala (Omniscience) mean to have the knowledge of each and every thing in the universe. However, the words Sarvajñatā, Sabbannuta-nāna and Kevala are translated into English by the word

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[1] sarvaṁ jānātīti sarvajnaḥ, āto'nupasarge kaḥ, aṣṭādhyāyī 3,2,3.

"omniscience" or "all embracing knowledge".

The concept of omniscience (sarvajñatā) can be conceived from two points of view. From the objective point of view, "omniscience" means knowing everything numerically and quantitatively. From the qualitative point of view, the word "omniscience" means to have the knowledge of the epitome of everything. This type of knowledge reveals two kinds of meaning: first, knowledge of Reality (tattvajñatā) and second, knowledge of Dharma (dharmajñatā)

In Indian philosophy the word Sarvajña has been used in a special sense to mean a person possessing the knowledge of supersensuous truths such as Dharma, heaven (svarga) and liberation (moksa), apart from the knowledge of the sensuous objects of the world. In other words, the omniscient person is the knower of reality (tattvajña).

To establish its own authority, each school of Indian philosophy has developed a different concept of omniscience, and has used this word with a slightly different connotation. The School of Cārvāka does not hold the possibility of omniscience. The School of Mīmāṁsā maintains that the Vedas are omniscient, but that no being can be omniscient. The School of Nyāyavaiśeṣika Seśvara-Sāmkhya and Yoga maintain the omniscience of God. The School of Advaita Vedānta holds the omniscience of God as well as the omniscience of man. Although they do not believe the authority of the Vedas, or of God, or Prakṛti, the Buddhists and Jainas hold that only a human being can become omniscient.

The Buddhists hold that omniscience (sarvajñatā) depends upon the full knowledge of all things, sensuous and supersensuous. According to the Buddhists, this follows from the removal of the hindrance of

affliction (kleśāvaraṇa) and hindrance of cognisable things (jñeyāvaraṇa). The Buddhists hold that that person alone is omniscient who knows the whole world in its real form of "soullessness" (anātmavāda). They further assert that only the Buddha, not the other teachers, fulfills all the conditions of this definition. Therefore, he has been placed above all other religious teachers by the Buddhists.

It seems that the concept of omniscience arose in Indian thought because of the desire to describe supersensuous realities such as Dharma, God, the self, heaven and liberation, etc. These supersensuous realities are commonly accepted by Indian religious traditions. They cannot be verified, however, by normal human perceptions. Consequently, the question arises as to whether anybody can have a direct vision of Dharma and other supersensuous truths. The limit of human knowledge arouses a desire to have an unlimited knowledge. Is this possible? This recurring problem in Indian metaphysical thinking has drawn the attention of Indian thinkers to the concept of Omniscience. Every understanding of religious authority is associated in some way with the concept of Omniscience and this has become a major matter of discussion in Indian philosophy.

It is the unique characteristic of Indian philosophy that it lays so much emphasis on the nature and limitation of knowledge. When all the limitations of knowledge are removed, the state of omniscience is achieved. In other words, omniscience is the culmination of knowledge. Indian thought generally takes the position that the limitations of knowledge can be removed and that one can acquire the knowledge of supersensuous realities. When the veil covering the knowledge is removed,

the knowledge of each and every thing of the universe can shine forth in the person's intellect. The intellect can reflect these objects like a mirror. This knowing in its most perfect form is called omniscience. Although every system of Indian philosophy deals with the concept of omniscience, Buddhism, Jainism and Mīmāṁsā have dealt with it in greater detail.

In Indian thought Dharma is derived from two sources: first, the divine sources (like gods, God and the Vedas); second, human sources (like the Buddha and Mahāvīra). Divine sources are already attributed the concept of Omniscience. That is to say, all-knowingness is the very nature of divinity. Consequently, the Dharma can be revealed through divine sources. But, here the question arises whether the Dharma can be revealed by a human being. This is possible if a human being can become Omniscient. Although at first glance one might feel that this was an untenable position, Indian philosophy does not take that attitude since it refuses to accept that there is ultimately a distinction between man's most basic nature and divinity itself. Indian thought accepts the possibility of enlightenment by means of spiritual discipline (yoga). This enlightenment is the self-realization of the divine character of man. A person who becomes enlightened also removes the hindrance which lies in the way of the acquisition of knowledge. Thus every enlightened person necessarily becomes omniscient. The enlightened person is fully entitled to reveal Dharma because Omniscience involves a revelation of Dharma.

Now the question is whether a supersensuous reality, like Dharma, can be directly perceived or not. The Cārvāka and Mīmāṁsa hold

that Dharma cannot be perceived by any being. They do not believe in any omniscient being or a knower of Dharma. All other systems of Indian philosophy believe in the direct intuitive realization of Dharma. They believe in the existence of omniscient beings, either divine or human, as the perceivers of Dharma. Invariably every religious teacher has been declared the knower of highest truth or the secrets of Dharma because of his omniscience.

It is hard to trace when this concept of omniscience appeared as a conscious religio-philosophical problem in Indian thought. It is also hard to say whether human omniscience came first, because every enlightened person was considered to be omniscient, or whether divine omniscience came first, because some gods of the Vedas were attributed with omniscience, or whether God himself was conceived to be omniscient by the school of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika, Seśvara- Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta. It is evident from the Vedas that Indian thought has accepted the concept of human omniscience since the very beginning. Because the concept of human omniscience is prominent or popular from the very beginning of Indian thought, one might get the idea that human omniscience was introduced to Indian thought first and later on this idea gave rise to divine omniscience and gradually God, gods, and the Vedas were all accepted as omniscient. This view would seem to be supported by the Vedas themselves because the concept of human omniscience can be found there in that the Ṛṣis (or seers) of the Vedas are thought of as omniscient. Sāṅkya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Jainism and Buddhism each claim that their system was founded by an omniscient person. However, we do not agree with the view that human omniscience arose first in

Indian thought. We put the Vedas prior to any philosophical system of India. In the Vedas, the gods are thought of as omniscient and they in turn have the capacity to make people omniscient Ṛṣis. Therefore we conclude that the concept of divine omniscience was developed first in Indian thought and it gradually gave rise to the concept of human omniscience.

Was the concept of human omniscience developed because of its attribution to God or the Vedas, or was the concept attributed to God or the Vedas because an enlightened person was thought to be omniscient? Or was this concept attributed to God, the Vedas and man simultaneously? These questions do not pertain particularly to the subject of this thesis.

It seems that this concept of human omniscience was first introduced into Indian thought as a philosophical concept because of the religious controversies among Heterodox (Nāstika) Schools, specifically Jainism and Buddhism, and Orthodox (Āstika) Schools, specifically Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and Uttaramīmāṁsā. The religious teachers of some of the Nāstika schools were claimed omniscient for themselves in order to prove the validity of their teachings. The Āstika Schools had already accepted the omniscient authority of some supersensuous and super-human realities like God or the Vedas as proof of the validity of their religious teachings. But those who were not the followers of this tradition had to prove their own religious authority by attributing omniscience to their religious teachers. Thus the concept of human omniscience came into philosophy as a reaction against the concept of divine omniscience attributed to the gods, God

or the Vedas.

In the period following the sixth century B.C. (that is, the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra) there was a greal deal of discussion among Indian philosophers on the concept of human omniscience. Because the Buddha and Mahāvīra were considered to be omniscient teachers by their respective followers, a discussion arose as to whether or not a person can be omniscient. As a result of this discussion, two main streams of thought have emerged concerning human omniscience. According to one position, that is, the Cāravāka and Mīmāṁsā, an omniscient person is an impossibility; to the other, that is, the school of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedānta, Buddhism and Jainism, omniscience can be achieved by a human being.

From the time of the Buddha and onward, the concept of omniscience began to be used in Indian religious and philosophical systems in order to establish the omniscient authority of the Dharma. Whether or not this religious authority was a person or the Vedas or God, it was essential that the authority be considered omniscient. It was felt that only in this way was it possible to have the true Dharma, because an omniscient authority knows the true nature of everything, sensuous and supersensuous. Only the true Dharma, if followed properly, can fulfill the real purpose of life by leading the people to prosperity in this life and to the highest good or liberation after life. Thus the concept of omniscience was accepted as an essential part of the religio-philosophical discussions in the history of Indian thought, and every religious teacher or authority was necessarily considered to be omniscient.

Although the concept of omniscience was propounded in the sixth century B.C., it did not become prominent as a subject of philosophical debate and controversy until the second century A.D. The catalysts for this controversy were the numerous speculations on the true nature of Dharma by every school of Indian philosophy. They all agreed that the true nature of Dharma should be revealed by an omniscient authority. So the controversy over Dharma, its real nature, its revealer or teacher, led to the co-relative controversy over omniscience in the second century at the time of Jaimini the Mīmāṁsaka. He was prompted to inquire into the true nature of Dharma, against Vādarāyaṇa the Uttaramīmāṁsaka who desired to know the true nature of Brahman. This led naturally to the desire to define the true nature of omniscience.

The concept of omniscience became a burning problem in Indian thought in the seventh century mainly because of the controversy regarding the concept of Dharma among Mīmāṁsā, Jainism and Buddhist schools. The school of Mīmāṁsā did not accept the possibility of omniscience in any human being and rejected this concept through various modes of argument. To refute the arguments of Mīmāṁsā and to establish the concept of omniscience in general, and omniscience in particular (that is, human omniscience), the heterodox schools of Jainism and Buddhism dialectically established the concept of human omniscience. This concept of omniscience became very popular in religious and philosophical discussions of Indian thought; when Kumārila tried to refute this concept of omniscience in any being and established the fact that Dharma can be known only through the omniscient Vedas, this concept became a matter for dispute among the other systems of Indian

thought. The Jains and the Buddhists became the main opponents of Mīmāṁsā on this issue and argued for the possibility of human omniscience. In fact they refuted the possibility of divine omniscience by rejecting the omniscience of gods, God, and the Vedas, but they did establish the concept of human omniscience. They emphasized that only a human being can be omniscient. They did this because they wanted to prove the validity and superiority of their own religion by proving that their religion was founded by an omniscient religious teacher. The omniscient knows the true nature of everything, sensuous or supersensuous. Therefore he cannot misguide people while teaching supersensuous realities like Dharma, heaven, hell, soul, rebirth, liberation, etc.

Early Buddhism does not lay emphasis on the omniscience of Buddha, yet still it asserts him as the knower of Dharma. However, the Mahāyāna Buddhist regards Buddha as the omniscient one and because of his all-knowingness he has been declared as the authority of Dharma. In the earliest Pāli Nikāyas the Buddha has not explicitly declared himself as the omniscient religious teacher nor has he been regarded by his disciples as an all-knowing religious teacher. In fact, Buddha did not like to involve himself in metaphysical discussions because his aim was confined to revealing the Dharma. He kept himself aloof from answering the fourteen unspeakable questions (avyākṛta-praśna). In the seventh century, A. D. Kumārila rejected the idea of a being (human or divine) as the knower of Dharma and tried to establish the authority of the Vedas for knowing Dharma. After that time it became essential for the Buddhist philosophers to counter the arguments of

Kumārila in order to establish the authority of the Buddha as a religious teacher. Dharmakīrti holds that Dharma can be perceived by a being directly, therefore a being can be the knower of the Dharma. Thus, by various modes of argument, he has established the authority of the Buddha as the only authoritative religious teacher in order to put Buddhism on at least an equal footing with other religious systems of India.

The omniscience of the Buddha is emphasized and elaborated mainly by the Vijñānavād Buddhist philosophers, beginning about the fifth century A.D. The fifth century A.D. was the beginning of the golden period of Indian philosophy. Here we find a tripartite struggle between the Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya and Buddhist schools. This tripartite struggle was originally started by Diṅnāga, the father of medieval logic in India. He criticized the Nyāya-Sūtra of Akṣapāda Gautama and its commentary by Vātsyāyana called Nyāyabhāsya.

> Dignāga by the celebrity he won in disputations has been one of the most powerful propagators of Buddhism. He is credited with having achieved the "conquest of the world."* Just as a universal monarch brings under his sway all India, so is the successful winner of disputations the propagator of his creed over the whole of the continent of India. Cashmere seems to have been the only part of India where he has not been, but he was visited by representatives of that country who later on founded schools there. These schools carried on the study of his works and produced several celebrated logicians.[2]

Diṅnāga felt that the charges levelled by the school of Mīmāṁsā and Nyāya against the Buddhist doctrines could not be disproved

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[2]Th. Stcherbatsky, Buddhist Logic, Vol. I, "Introduction", p. 34. *Footnote No. 1 in original source. dig-vijaya.

without accepting a new form of logic. This new logic would enable Buddhism to be on an equal footing theologically, philosophically and religiously with the other Indian traditions. This was most essential since Buddhism until this time was devoid of an adequate framework in which to interpret the tradition of the Buddha. Dinnāga, however, gave a new definition of logic on the basis of Buddhist philosophy and from this standpoint he criticized the views of others and set forth a new logical proof of Buddhist doctrines:

> The Buddhist philosopher Diṅnāga (c. 425 A.D.) may be regarded as the founder of the school of pure logic in Buddhism....
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> It is interesting to note that in the hands of Diṅnāga, Nyāya becomes a pure science of logic....With Diṅnāga, as with other logicians of the Medieval School, the utility of Nyāya primarily lay in its being a means of defence and attack in the philosophical controversies that were then raging in the country. He tries his best to demolish the position of Vātsyāyana, the commentator of the Nyāya-sūtras. Udyotakara (c. 550 A.D.) came forward to defend Vātsyayana against Diṅnāga.
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> The task of defending Diṅnāga against Udyotakara was undertaken by Dharmakīrti, (c. 600 A.D.) pupil's pupil of Diṅnāga.... Dharmakīrti also criticizes the views of Dhartrhari and Kumārila as well. Dharmakīrti in his turn is criticized by Vyomasiva, Akalanka, Haribhadra and Hayanta.[3]

Eventually the Jaina, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Mīmāṁsā and Nyāya Schools also adopted their own logical methods to support their doctrines and criticize those of others. Uddyotakara, a propagator of the Nyāya

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[3]A. S. Altekar, Introduction to the Pramānavārtikabhāshyam (ed. by Rāhula Sāṅkrtyāyana, Banaras, 1953), pp. 6-7.

School, in his book Nyāya-Vārtika, has tried to refute the arguments of Diṅnāga against the Nyāya doctrines. God, he holds, is the basis of Dharma because He is the only omniscient supreme being. He has proved the sole omniscience of God on the basis of His function as creator of the whole universe. Only a being who is the creator of the universe can be omniscient. It is, therefore, impossible for any human being like the Buddha or Vardhamāna Mahāvīra to be the omniscient religious teacher.

To answer the objections of Uddyotakara, the Naiyāyika and the Mīmāṁsākas and to re-establish the Buddhist doctrines, Dharmakīrti wrote the Pramāṇa-Vārtika. His criticism was answered by Vācaspati Misra in his book Nyāya-Vārtike-Tātparya-Ṭīkā. Dharmakīrti also criticized vigorously the doctrine of the Mīmāṁsākas. His criticism was answered by Kumārila in his book Ślokavārtika. In order to re-establish the doctrine of Mīmāṁsā he severely attacked the Buddhist doctrines and attempted to prove the authority of the Vedas. He holds that only the Vedas can be omniscient and an omniscient being, whether a human being or a god, is an impossibility. According to him, the non-omniscient teachers like the Buddha or Vardhamāna should not be accepted as authority for Dharma.

Thus the schools of Mīmāṁsā and Nyāya challenged the religious authority of Buddhism by seeking to disprove the omniscience of any human being. On this basis the Buddha's teachings regarding Dharma were not accepted as authoritative by them and were seen as misleading. The attack of Kumārila, Uddyotakara and Vācaspati Misra on the doctrines of Buddhism, and their refutation of the omniscience of the Buddha,

shook the position of Buddhism as a religion and it became difficult for people to have faith in the teachings of the Buddha.

> ...Buddhism in India was doomed. The most talented propagandist could not change the run of history. The time of Kumārila and Śaṅkara-ācārya, the great champions of brahmanical revival and opponents of Buddhism, was approaching....What might have been the deeper causes of the decline of Buddhism in India proper and its survival in the border lands, we never perhaps will sufficiently know, but historians are unanimous in telling us that Buddhism at the time of Dharmakīrti was not on the ascendency, it was not flourishing in the same degree as at the time of the brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The popular masses began to return their face from that philosophic, critical and pessimistic religion, and reverted to the worship of the great brahmin gods....
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> Dharmakīrti seems to have had a foreboding of the ill fate of his religion in India. He was also grieved by the absence of pupils who could fully understand his system and to whom the continuation of his work could have been entrusted. Just as Dignāga had no famous pupil, but his continuator emerged a generation later, so was it that Dharmakīrti's real continuator emerged a generation later.[4]

The Buddhist philosophers of the age felt the need to answer this challenge by establishing the Buddha as the only omniscient religious teacher in order to prove that Buddhism was as valid as the Vedic tradition, if not superior. They have tried to prove that only a human being could be omniscient, not the *Vedas* or God. They also tried to demonstrate that among human beings who have been acclaimed as omniscient religious teachers only the Buddha is omniscient because his teachings have not been disproved by any valid means of cognition.

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[4] Th. Stcherbatsky, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

They have used logical arguments to support the omniscience of the Buddha so that they could prove that Buddhism was the only true Dharma, since only Buddhism has been taught by an omniscient religious teacher.

Dinnāga paved the way for development of the Buddhist proofs for the omniscience of the Buddha by providing the logical structure. The later Sautrāntika Vijñānavādī Buddhists adopted this dialectical method in discussing the omniscience of the Buddha.

> We should, however, remember that the logicians of the age had cultivated a purely rational outlook to a great extent. Dinnāga was no doubt held in high esteem by the Buddhists but this did not prevent Dharmakīrti, his vārtikakāra, from dissenting from him and maintaining that the example, or Udaharana, cannot form part of syllogism. The very emergence of vartika as a form of literature is a clear proof that rationalism was fairly well developed in the period; the vārtikakāras were no doubt commenting upon earlier works....[5]

Dharmakīrti, however, has not rested his case on the omniscience of the Buddha, because he felt that the omniscience of any person cannot be examined by any empirical criterion. But he maintains that the Buddha is a reliable guide to Dharma, because he possesses true knowledge (jñānavān).[6]

> This is much more so because the whole chapter on the validity of knowledge is supposed to contain only a comment upon the initial stanza of Dignāga's work. This stanza contains a salutation to Buddha who along with the usual titles is here given the title of "Embodied Logic" (pramāna-bhūta).* The whole of Mahayanistic Buddhology, all the proofs of

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[5]A. S. Altekar, op. cit., p. 7.

[6]Pramāṇa-Vārtika (edited by Rāhul Sānkrityāyana, Patna, 1938), II, pp. 145-146.

> the existence of an absolute, Omniscient Being are discussed under that head.
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> We would naturally expect the work to begin with this chapter upon the validity of knowledge and the existence of an Omniscient Being....A further notable fact is that the chapter on Buddhology, the religious part, is not only dropped in all the other treaties, but Dharmakīrti most emphatically and clearly expresses his opinion to the effect that the absolute omniscient Buddha is a metaphysical entity, something beyond time, space and experience, and that therefore, our logical knowledge being limited to experience, we can neither think nor speak out anything definite about him,** we can neither assert nor deny his existence.[7]

The omniscience of the Buddha was most convincingly demonstrated in the last phase of Indian Vijñānavāda Buddhism. Th. Stcherbatsky names it "The Third or Religious School of Commentators".[8] The philosophers of this school have followed the logical tradition of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti in proving the validity of knowledge. In this connection they have logically established the concept of human omniscience as well as the omniscience of the Buddha.

Prajñākaragupta in Pramāṇavārtika-Bhāsyam (or Vārtikālaṅkāraḥ), Śāntaraksita in his Tattvasaṅgraha and Kamalaśīla in his Pañjikā have gone further than Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti and have dialectically established the concept of human omniscience and the omniscience of the

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[7]Th. Stcherbatsky, op. cit., pp. 38-39.
*Footnote No. 2 in original source. pramānabhutāya jagad-dhitaisine, etc. op. Dut.
**Footnote No. 2 in original source, p. 39. Cp. the closing passage of Santānāntarasiddhi, and NB, III, 97.

[8]Ibid., p. 40.

Buddha while answering the objections of Vācaspatimisra and Kumārila.

These Buddhist philosophers have accepted the possibility of human omniscience and have maintained through various modes of logical argument that only the Buddha and no other religious teacher is omniscient, because his teachings of Dharma have not been disproved by the accepted valid means of cognition (pramāna).

By holding the concept of human omniscience and the omniscience of the Buddha, the Buddhists do not mean that the omniscient person should know all the objects of the world. Their primary aim is to prove that the Buddha has the knowledge of supersensuous truths and his teaching of Dharma is the means of attaining heaven and liberation. The knowledge of the Buddha is not hampered by obstacles because he is omniscient. The Buddhists dialectically establish the concept of human omniscience in order to prove the existence of a person who knows Dharma which is the means leading to heaven and freedom.[9] Their main aim is to prove that the authority for Dharma is the teachings of an omniscient teacher and only the Buddha is an omniscient religious teacher.

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[9]Svargāpavargasamprāpti hetujno'sttti gamyate; Sāksānna kevalaṁ kintu sarvajno'pi pratīyate. Tattvasaṅgrahā (ed. by Pt. K. Krishnamacharya, Gai Baroda, 1926), Verse 3309.

CHAPTER I

THE CONCEPTION OF OMNISCIENCE IN THE VEDIC TRADITION

In this chapter we will attempt to trace the concept of omniscience in all of its multiple permutations throughout the Vedic tradition (viz. the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the schools of Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, yoga, and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika). This is a necessary preliminary to enable one to understand the contrasting theories of omniscience in Buddhism and Jainism.

The Conception of Omniscience in the Vedas

The concept of omniscience can be traced in the Vedas themselves. Many Vedic gods are conceived as omniscient. Although there is no mention of the word Sarvajña (omniscient), the other Sanskrit synonyms for omniscience are mentioned. The Sanskrit words with similar meanings are: Viśvavit,[1] Viśva-Vedas,[2] Viśva-Vidvāna,[3] Sarvavit,[4] Viśva-Chakshu,[5] and Visva Draṣṭā.[6] Such Vedic words have the implicit sense of the word omniscience.

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[1]Ṛg. Veda, 19, 91, 31; Atharva Veda 1, 13, 4. Rigvedasamhitā, with comy. of Sāyaṇa by F. M. Müller (London, 1892).

[2]Ṛg. Veda, 1, 21, 1; Sama Veda, 1, 1, 3.

[3]Ṛg. Veda, 9, 4, 85, 10, 122, 2.

[4]Atharva Veda, 17, 1, 11.

[5]Ṛg. Veda, 10, 31, 3.

[6]Atharva Veda, 6, 107, 4.

Both divine omniscience and human omniscience are found in the Vedas. The Vedas also ascribe omniscience to persons with supersensuous knowledge and supernatural power. It is evident from the Vedas themselves that the comprehension of supersensuous realities is possible; that is to say, a person can perceive or hear supersenuous truths like Dharma because of his omniscience.

A person with omniscience is called Ṛṣi, one who has the intuitive realization of reality. The Vedic Gods are inspired sages (kaviḥ). They too are ascribed with omniscience. The Vedic gods are beings endowed with supersensuous cognition. Themselves superconscient, they have power to make others omniscient. In the Ṛg. Veda there is a description of the long-haired deities who are said to promote the vision of the Ṛṣis.[7] That is why the Vedic gods are sometimes referred to as the makers of Ṛṣis (Ṛṣikṛt). The gods Soma[8] and Agni[9] are called omniscient.

The difference between a god and a Ṛṣi is one of degree and not in the kind of power of omniscience.[10] Like Vedic gods, the Ṛṣis also have the possibility of acquiring visionary knowledge of truth.

The Vedic Ṛṣis have knowledge of supersensuous truths. The

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[7] Ṛg. Veda, 1, 164, 44.

[8] Ibid., 9, 96, 18.

[9] Ibid., 1, 31, 16.

[10] Ibid., 9, 76, 4.

knowledge ascribed to the Ṛṣis is not discursive, nor ratiocinative, but has the nature of full-blown intuition.

Agni

In the Ṛg. Veda the god Agni is considered to be omnipresent in the universe, in the sky, earth and waters.[11] He is also known as omniscient (viśvavedas).[12] He is also called thousand-eyed (Sahasrākṣa).[13] Furthermore, Agni is called the poet (Kavih).[14] He is also a mediator between man and gods,[15] a Ṛṣi inspired with vision.[16]

Agni is considered an omniscient god like Varuṇa. Varuṇa is the omniscient god par excellence and Agni is both omnipresent and omniscient.[17] Agni has visionary insight or omniscience. His omniscience is especially marked in the office of hotar.[18] Agni has been also considered a divine being who promotes inspired thought and provides omniscience to man.[19]

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[11] Ṛg. Veda, X, 5, 1.

[12] Ibid., 1, 147, 3; IV, 4, 13.

[13] Ibid., I, 179, 12.

[14] Ibid., I, 12, 6.

[15] Ibid., 2, 6, 7; cf. 5, 21, 3; 10, 110, 1.

[16] Ibid., 6, 1, 1.

[17] Ibid., 1, 147, 3.

[18] Ibid., 10, 11, 1.

[19] Ibid., 10, 87, 12.

Sūrya

Not only Agni but also the Sūrya is ascribed with the power of omniscience (viśvacaksas),[20] and "of wide vision" (urucaksas).[21] Sun is the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa.[22] He is also the eye of Heaven.[23]

Varuṇa

The god Varuṇa is attributed with the power of omniscience. Varuṇa, the Omniscient, sees all and makes revelations.[24] Varuṇa is the upholder of the moral law (ṛta dhṛta). He sits high above Gods and perceives all things. He governs the whole universe morally.

Soma

The god Soma is all-knower (viśvavid). He is the controller of the mind (Manasā Patih)[25] and is endowed with a thousand eyes.[26] He has immediate insight into the nature of all things and is king of all worlds.[27]

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[20]Ibid., 1, 50, 2.

[21]Ibid., 7, 35, 8.

[22]Ibid., 6, 51, 1.

[23]Ibid., 1, 72, 10.

[24]Ibid., 7, 87, 4.

[25]Ibid., 9, 11, 8, 28, 1.

[26]Ibid., IX, 60, 1-2; 66, 7.

[27]Visvavit pavate amnīsī somo visvasya bhuvanasya Rājā. Ṛg. Veda, 9, 97, 56.

Vāyu and Maruts

The wind god Vāyu is omniscient like Agni and Varuṇa. His omniscience depends upon sight. Like Indra, Varuṇa and Agni, Vāyu also has a thousand eyes.[28] In so far as Vāyu goes everywhere and sees all things, he is omniscient as well.

Dyayus

In the Ṛg. Veda Dyayus (sky) is associated with Prithvi (earth), and is addressed as Dyāvāpṛthivi (sky-earth). He is credited with omniscience (viśvavedas).[29]

Indra

The god Indra is perhaps the most important deity of the Ṛg. Veda. He is the all-perceiving god with manifold eyes (Sahasrākṣa).[30]

Thus in the Vedas the concept of omniscience is a faculty of knowing which brings the intellect into intimate contact with every thing sensuous and supersenuous, the supersensuous realities. Omniscience is not an attribute of all Vedic gods in general, but is specially an attribute of the sky gods and the gods who are connected with the heavenly realms of light. The Vedic gods are omniscient because their nature is self-luminous.

The Conception of Omniscience in the Upaniṣads

The Vedic concept of omniscience is further developed in the

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[28] Ṛg. Veda, 1, 23, 3.

[29] Ibid., VI, 70, 6.

[30] Ibid., 1, 23, 3.

idea of self-realization of Brahman. The Upaniṣads, however, do not give a comprehensive and elaborate account of the concept of omniscience. But they maintain that he who knows the self, knows everything.[31]

The main stress is on the attainment of the knowledge of Ātman (self). Thus, in the Upaniṣads sarvajña means Atmajna (knower of the self). The word sarvajña is not used in the Vedas but it is frequently used in the Upaniṣads in the sense of Omniscience.

The Conception of Omniscience in the Advaita Vedānta

Advaita Vedanta accepts the concept of human omniscience. By its nature, a jīva is not omniscient, but through spiritual discipline it can reach the state of omniscience which is penultimate to liberation. According to Sankara, omniscience should not be attributed to a liberated soul or Brahman.[32] However, he accepts that supernatural qualities like omniscience can be achieved by a person in the course of spiritual development by yoga. The supernatural qualities of Saguṇa Brahman, like omniscience, etc., can be achieved by a man (Saguṇa vidyāvipāka sthānantvetat). Suresvara, in the commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad, says that a human being can share in omniscience only through a relation with the divine, for omniscience is a divine quality and only God is omniscient and omnipotent. God's knowledge, like that of the yogi, is immediate.[33]

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[31] Yah Atmavid Sah Sarvavid, "Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Upaniṣads, 4.5.6.

[32] Śārīraka-Bhāsya (ed. by N. L. Shastri, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1927), 4,4.6: '"Sarvajnatvam Sarveṣvaratvam ca.... na caitanyavat Svarūpatva sambhavah".

[33] Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 7,10,1.

The school of Advaita Vedanta maintains that the Saguṇa Brahman, who is the cause of the empirical world, is omniscient.[34]

The liberated soul is not considered omniscient in Advaita Vedānta. Pure consciousness is the very nature of the soul. Neither bondage nor liberation of the soul is real; both are due to illusion. Only from an empirical standpoint is it said that a soul becomes free from bondage and becomes omniscient. However, in the state of liberation the soul becomes absolute non-dual consciousness. In this state the soul becomes pure consciousness and does not remain a knower. There is no otherness and there is nothing besides Brahman; therefore, it cannot know anything else but Brahman. The consciousness of outside objects is only due to ignorance, but in this state ignorance is completely annihilated. There is no object outside of it, so the liberated soul can know only itself. Consequently, Advaita Vedānta maintains that omniscience is not possible in the state of liberation.

Different Theories of Omniscience in the Advaita Vedānta

The book Lights on Vedānta provides a detailed account of the concept of omniscience in the Advaita Vedānta. My interpretation of the concept of omniscience in Advaita Vedānta is based on this book.[35]

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[34] Sārīraka-Bhāṣya, 2, 1, 14.

[35] Veermani prasad upadhyaya, Lights on Vedānta (Varanasi, 1959), pp. 141-144.

Whereas the individual self is credited only with a limited knowledge, the Ātman is credited with omniscience. Although Avidyā is said to obscure the true nature of Ātman and it projects the jīva, this obscuration does not alter the essential nature of the Ātman which is described as both omniscient and omnipotent. These obscurations or limitations (kañcuk) are four in number (kāla, avidyā, rāga, niyati). But the Advaitins emphasize the two primary limitations of the jīva, its limited knowledge, its limited power. The cognition of the jīva is restricted spatially, temporally, objectively, and can be divided into two categories: direct and indirect cognition. The immediate cognition of the jīva is dependent upon its various faculties or psychoses (vṛtti); this is not the case with the Ātman which is not dependent upon any faculty or vṛtti. Rather, its omniscience operates without reference to any natural faculty (vṛtti) of the jīva.

The Advaitins have two theories concerning omniscience: one attributes omniscience to Ātman itself which is pure consciousness and the other emanation or reflection of consciousness into the intellect (buddhi) which is a modification of māyā. Bhāratītīrtha asserts that the Ātman as consciousness, which is connected with its adjunct (upādhi) māyā, contains the traces of all buddhis as their unchanging source and is capable of comprehending all their processes and content. The author of Prakaṭārtha also upholds this second theory of omniscience and points to a parallelism between the cognition of the jīva via its adjunct (upādhi) antahkarara or mind and the omniscience of the Ātman via its adjunct māyā. In the former the cognition is nevertheless dependent upon its psychoses or vṛtti and arises only

with reference to external objects in the latter. The whole phenomenal world is upheld and transformed by virtue of māyā, the adjunct of Ātman. The buddhi or the reflection of the Ātman as Cit operates in both cases, although it operates in an unlimited manner only in the latter.

Jñānaghana Pāda, the author of Tattva-Suddhi establishes the omniscience of the Ātman with respect to both future and past times and compares it to the memory of the jīva. Even before the emanation of the universe māyā, because of the invisible powers (adṛṣṭa) of jīvas, is changed into the prior apprehensions of all objects which are only later manifested. Brahman is the witness (sākṣi) of this transformation and indirectly acts as an agent for this transformation. So Brahman as Ātman, reflected in the most subtle transformation of māyā buddhi, has a prior knowledge of the whole phenomenal world. Just as past objects are cognized by recollection, so the total corpus of past phenomena can be cognized by the Ātman by means of this creative association with māyā and buddhi.

We must distinguish between two classes of Vṛtti. The first class or the Primordial Vṛtti should be distinguished from the natural Vṛtti which is diverse, discrete and empirically conditioned. The Primordial Vṛtti is all-encompassing and unlimited and immune from the limitations of empirical cognition. This Primordial Vṛtti is the transformation of māyā in situ and is associated with Ātman as Cit (Cidānśa) and, together with the Sadanśa (Truth-aspect), initiates the evolution of samsārā, whereas the empirical Vṛtti is the transformation of the mind, the necessary changes having been made, and it

acts together with the perceptive consciousness, Pramātā or the jīva. This theory is critically scrutinized by Ramadvaya, the author of Vedānta-Kaumudī, who condemned this model of omniscience as unsatisfactory. Omniscience, being unconditioned and unlimited by nature, should not be described as conditioned by this Primordial Vṛtti (or cognition through psychosis) and as reducible to a mere reflection of Ātman in the buddhi. If it is so conditioned then instead of being unchanging and indestructible it would have to be described as destructible, as this Primordial Vṛtti is subject to the same law of extinction as the gross elements. Such conditioning would then be transferred to omniscience itself, particularly to the omniscient Brahman as pure Consciousness (Cit). In this hypothetical situation, omniscience itself would perish which would paralyze the creative power of Brahman both with respect to its first transformation as māyā, and also with respect to the gross elements preceded by īkṣaṇa. Rather, he maintains that omniscience is the very nature of Brahman as pure Cit and is inherently capable of cognizing all that is created or manifested. It is capable of observing all that has been created or will be created in a spontaneous and unrestricted manner. This is possible because the impressions of all things are preserved in māyā like an unfinished picture. Thus to know māyā completely through omniscience would entail knowing these impressions.

Thus we can isolate three schools within Advaita. The Vivarana School maintains that the omniscient Ātman can perceive the present object, through direct perception, the past object through memory and the future object through inference. Vācaspati repudiates both this

theory of omniscience associated with impressions or reflections, and the theory of omniscience which is associated with the Vṛtti of māyā. He maintains that omniscience is possible because of the self-consciousness of Brahman 'Svarūpa Caitanya'. Consciousness cannot be described as any empirical product as it is one of the essential definitions of Brahman (Brahman as Cit). But consciousness, when linked to the perception of a particular object, is accomplished by Brahman. Thus the Ātman is omniscient by nature, as all its objects of knowing are products of Brahman.

The third view is that of Suresvara who advocates a completely new theory which focuses on the necessity for Iśvara to explain the possibility of omniscience. This explanation is dependent upon his Ābhāsa theory. All appearances of Brahman are possible only through the mediation of avidyā; specifically through the appearance of Sat or Cit in avidyā. Iśvara as the Appearance of Cit through avidyā, is the necessary causal link for all empirical entities and is described as naturally omniscient. Thus omniscience is explained by Suresvara without any reference to any modification of avidyā.

The Conception of Omniscience in the Other Schools of Vedānta

The dualists of the Vedānta School maintain a fundamental difference between the Brahman and the world. The finite souls and the material universe move according to the will of Brahman. Such a Brahman is omniscient, like the God of Nyāya. In the view of Visistādvaita, the Brahman is immanent in the world and is therefore omniscient. The Dvaitādvaita school holds that the Brahman is perfect

and all-embracing and that the finite Jivas are only imperfect forms of the Brahman. Undoubtedly, such a Brahman is omniscient.

Dualistic Vedanta holds that omniscience can be attained after liberation. A liberated jīva becomes omniscient. This school maintains the difference between Brahman and jīva and emphasizes that there cannot be any identity of the two. According to them, Brahman is determined and endowed with attributes (Saguṇa), unlike Nirguṇa Brahman. When the soul becomes liberated, it comes into inseparable association with Saguṇa Brahman; consequently, it acquires the omniscience and other qualities of Saguṇa Brahman.

It seems that the omniscience attributed by these schools to the liberated soul is not of the same nature as the omniscience attributed to God by the schools of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Seśvara Sāṁkhya, Yoga and Advaita Vedānta. The omniscience of God in these systems is eternal, unfettered and all-embracing. But the dualistic Vedantins believe that a jīva has a limited capacity for apprehension and that the jīva retains individuality at liberation and is not completely merged into God. Therefore, his limitations remain and he cannot become omniscient like God.

With his limited capacity, the liberated jīva does not have the ability to perceive constantly all cosmic things and the phenomena of all times and places as if they were always in the present. This type of omniscience is attributed to God, but it cannot be attributed to a jīva, because a jīva does not acquire all the powers of God. The maximum ability of a jīva is that he can know anything that he wants to know. In this sense alone he may be described as omniscient.

The Conception of Omniscience in the School of Yoga

The school of Yoga emphatically stresses the purification of body, mind, and soul in order to achieve tranquility of mind (Citta). Patanjali mentions the vision of an enlightened person (siddhadarśanam)[36] and states that as a result of meditation the yogi can discern everything (pratibhād va sarvaṁ). According to the subcommentary of Vacaspatimisra[37] on this passage, the intuitive knowledge of the yogin produces divine vision and leads to omniscience. This state is called pratibhā, which is produced by the continued practice of concentration on the self. Therefore pratibhā is the supreme faculty of "omniscience". With the continued practice of concentration on the self, omniscience is gradually evolved.

By the continued practice of meditation, the Yogī is said to become omniscient in the last stage before self-realization. How this concentration leads to omniscience is explained by the author of the commentary. According to the school of Yoga, the gunas are the essence of all things which have both the determinations and the objects of determinations as their essence, these gunas present themselves as being the essence of the object for sight in its totality to their owner, that is, the soul.[38] In other words, all things of the

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[36] Yoga-Sutra (Pātanjala-Darsana) with Bhāsya and Vyākhyā (ed. Jivananda Vidyasagara, Calcutta, 1895), 3, 33.

[37] Ibid., 3, 36.

[38] Yoga-Bhāsya, 3, 49: "sarvatmano guna vyavasayavyavaseyatmakah svaminam ksetrajnaṁ pratyasesardrsyatmatvenopasthitah".

universe and their knowledge are simultaneously revealed to the cosmic consciousness of the Yogi, because he reaches the state of self-consciousness which is the state of omniscience. By gradually increasing his concentration a Yogi acquires the ability to perceive immediately (pratyakṣa) the most remote or hidden or subtle or supersensuous things.

The school of Yoga accepts the omniscience of God[39] in the sense that all objects of the universe, gross and subtle, past, present and future, are constantly in the knowledge of God in their perfect form and nothing is outside of his knowledge. The omniscience of God is permanent, but the omniscience of a Yogi is temporary, because it is gained by meditation and is lost when liberation is achieved and individuality is lost. Omniscience is not part of the natural endowment of the human soul and is only one of the achievements (siddhis) attained just before self-realization or liberation.

The Conception of Omniscience in the School of Sāṅkhya

In the original early literature of Sāṅkhya, we cannot find omniscience attributed to either Prakṛti or Puruṣa. However, according to the Jaina author Prabhācandrācārya, in his book Prameyakamalamārtanda, the cosmic principle Prakṛti is held to be omniscient by some Sāṅkhya philosophers.[40] They hold that Prakṛti

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[39]Tatra Niratisaya sarvajnatya bījam. Yoga-Sūtra, Samādhipādah, 25.

[40]"Nikhila Jagatkartrttvaccasya Evasesajnattvamastu Prakrteh Sarvajnatyam Jagatkarttrtvam ceti Sankaprakarane". Prabha Chandra, Prameyakamalamārtaṁda (ed. by Mahendra Kumar Shastri, Bombay, 1941), p. 297.

as the creator of the world must necessarily be omniscient. The question arises concerning how unconscious Prakrti can be omniscient. Prakrti is unconscious and inactive before creation starts. Prakrti starts the world process when it comes into contact with conscious Purusa. On this basis they hold that the consciousness of Purusa must also be reflected in Prakrti. Although the consciousness of Prakrti is not like the pure consciousness of Purusa, Prakrti as world creator must be regarded as omniscient. Intelligence and self-consciousness are due to the derivative consciousness of Prakrti.

The school of Sesvara Sāṅkhya does not believe that Prakrti becomes conscious at the time of creation. Therefore, they introduced God, who directs Prakrti toward the creation of the world in accordance with the Adrstas. According to them, this God is necessarily omniscient. In the original Sāṅkhya school God is not mentioned.

The liberated soul cannot become omniscient according to Sāṅkhya because Purusa becomes disassociated from Prakrti in the state of liberation. However, they hold that a Yogi who is aspiring to liberation can achieve omniscience before liberation. They maintain that a Yogi acquires some supernatural ability to perceive by which he can apprehend the phenomena of all places and of all times. This is possible because they come into direct contact with Prakrti. Everything is evolved from Prakrti and everything is dissolved into Prakrti; nothing is outside Prakrti. Therefore, by seeing Prakrti he sees everything evolving out of it and dissolving into it. Thus a Yogi is able to perceive all things of the universe by coming into

contact with the universal basis of all things, that is, Prakṛti.[41] He establishes this contact through the practice of yoga. This supernatural power of a Yogi is called omniscience. Thus, the Sāṅkhya philosophers do not believe in divine omniscience nor in the omniscience of a liberated soul, but they do believe in the omniscience of a person or Yogi who aspires to the achievement of liberation.

The Conception of Omniscience in the School of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika

The Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika systems of philosophy maintain the theory of an omniscient and all-powerful God. Although, like the Samkhya philosophers, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika systems admit the existence of an infinite number of eternal and uncreated souls, in the place of one Prakṛti they posit as an infinite number of atoms. According to the Naiyāyikas, then, the world is constituted of an infinite number of material atoms and an infinite number of souls, with Adṛṣṭas peculiar to each one of them.

The question thus arises: How do the bodies originate which are the means of the soul's varied worldly enjoyments and what is the originative cause of the physical world? Since the souls are by nature passive, they cannot create their bodies. The material atoms being inactive cannot create bodies either. Therefore, to explain the problem of world origination the Naiyayikas conceive of an all-powerful God, who creates the jīva in the body in order to experience the good and the bad fruits of their actions, and creates the world in order to function as the locus of such enjoyments. God's infinite intelligence is manifest in the world-process. The world is an effect (Kārya)

of God's action. The effect is not automatic but caused. The cause is not material, but an effect of the intelligent cause that is God. In other words, an effect leads us to conclude that there is an intelligent agent behind it. God is thus the potter who is the efficient cause of the pot (saṁsāra).[42]

The Naiyāyikas conceive of God as necessarily omniscient. He makes a body and an environment for each soul exactly in accordance with its Adṛṣṭa. God not only creates the world but knows the purpose of creation. Creation is not a matter of blind chance but has purpose to be what it is. The world is a world of infinite possibilities. The possibilities of fruition and enjoyment presuppose a God with infinite intelligence and omniscience, for God must know what it is to be a God of infinite creative function.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view of liberation (Apavarga) is an unconscious state. Just as omniscience is impossible in a being who has entered the state of Nirvāṇa, similarly it is impossible in the state of absolute liberation to have consciousness. The Nyāya philosophy thus maintains that when liberation (Apavarga) is attained, all those attributes which are characteristics of the world (desire, pleasure, aversion, and effort, etc.) fall apart. In the state of liberation Jñāna or consciousness is absent like other attributes of the soul. The Vaiśeṣikas also maintain that the state of liberation is a state of simultaneous annihilation of all its attributes, e.g., consciousness, etc. Like the expanse of sky, a liberated soul is unconscious. In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika systems, a liberated soul thus cannot be omniscient.

According to the Naiyāyikas, the liberated soul has no

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42 Isvaraḥ kāraṇam puruṣakarmāphalyadarsanāt, Nyāya-Sūtra, 4, 2.

consciousness. Consequently, the question of omniscience in an emancipated being does not arise. According to the Nyāya theory of knowledge it is impossible for the instrument (Karaṇa) of knowledge to be simultaneously connected with more than one precept. Therefore, a simultaneous cognition of all things cannot be conceived. However, the Naiyāyikas hold that the recollections of all things or the cause of the cognition of all things may simultaneously present themselves in a particular state of knowledge which relates to the whole collection of objects. Such a knowledge is constitutive of a totality of knowledge (samūhālambana) which is identical with omniscience. Similar to the Nyāya doctrine of samūhālambana is the Vaiśeṣika conception of 'the knowledge of a seer' (Ārṣa-Jñāna), which means omniscience.

The Concept of Omniscience in the School of Mīmāṁsā

The orthodox system of the Mīmāṁsā is very firm supporter of the Vedas. It holds that only the Vedas are the omniscient authority for Dharma, because they are eternal and not written by any man. A human being cannot become omniscient because he is subject to moral, physical and intellectual limitations which cannot be transcended by any practice of yoga.

Taking omniscience as the necessary condition for perceiving super-sensuous truths like Dharma, which cannot be known by the normal perception, the Mīmāṁsakas, however, have attempted to prove the omniscience of the Vedas. The School of Mīmāṁsā has raised many objections against the concept of human omniscience and the omniscience of the Buddha.

Here we shall see the objections lodged against the concept of omniscience by the Mīmāṁsakas. The non-believers in omniscience like the Mīmāṁsakas can raise three possible kinds of objections. The first objection concerns the proof for the existence of the omniscient person. The second objection concerns the nature of omniscience. The third objection concerns the relationship between omniscience and speech, which are considered contradictory to each other.

Concerning the first type of objection, first, the existence of an omniscient person cannot be proved by any valid means of cognition. Second, in the whole world we do not at present see any omniscient person on the basis of which we can believe in the existence of an omniscient person in the past or in the future. Third, the achievement of omniscience, it is said, is possible by the means taught in the scriptures and the authority of the scriptures are accepted because they are revealed by an omniscient person. These are both mutually dependent assertions and cannot prove the existence of an omniscient person. Fourth, we do not find any valid proof to affirm or to negate the existence of an omniscient person. Therefore, the existence of an omniscient person is doubtful.

Regarding the second type of objection, it might first be asked whether the omniscient person perceives the objects of the world successively or simultaneously. If he perceives successively, there will never be a time when he will know all the objects of the world, because the objects will always continue to come into his cognition and his knowledge will remain incomplete. If he perceives simultaneously, he can have both omniscient and non-omniscient consciousness in a single cognitive moment of knowledge. Second, assuming he does know all the past, present and future things in a single moment, nothing remains to be known in the

second moment of consciousness. The second moment of cognition will be only a repetition of the first. Third, if the omniscient person can apprehend two opposite things like love and hatred in a single cognitive moment through his omniscient eye, then he himself should be associated with love and hatred. Fourth, if the omniscient person can perceive even the beginningless and endless objects, then the characteristic of beginninglessness and endlessness of those objects will be gone.

In the third type of objection, omniscience and speech are considered to be contradictory; the presence of one implies the absence of the other. The speaker cannot be omniscient and the omniscient person cannot teach anyone or express his omniscience.

These are the possible objections that have been lodged against the concept of omniscience by the school of Mīmāṁsā.

Thus we have seen how omniscience has been understood by the different Brahmānical schools. In the following chapter we shall examine the co-relative theories of omniscience in Jainism and Buddhism. This procedure will enable us to clarify the points of similarity and difference among the various schools in relation to this concept.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF OMNISCIENCE IN EARLY BUDDHISM

In this chapter we will attempt to trace the concept of omniscience in early Buddhism, especially in the Pāli *Nikāyas*. It has become a point of controversy among scholars whether in the earliest Pāli *Nikāyas* the Buddha was considered an omniscient religious teacher or whether he was just a religious teacher having the power of apprehending supersensuous realities like *dharma*, heaven, rebirth, etc. In the earliest Pāli *Nikāyas*, which is generally considered to be the earliest Buddhist scripture, the Buddha cannot be said to be an omniscient religious teacher like Vardhamāna, the Mahāvīra who was considered to be an omniscient religious teacher by the Jainas. However, the Buddha is depicted as an omniscient religious teacher in other works of early Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

According to the *Dīgha-Nikāya*, an *Arhat* possesses six kinds of supernatural knowledge (*abhinnā*). Although the *Dīgha-Nikāya* does not positively attribute omniscience to the Buddha, it does ascribe supernatural knowledge to him. The components of such a supernatural knowledge (*abhinnā*) are as follows: clairaudience (*dibbasota*), thought-reading (*paracittavijānāna*), recollecting one's previous births (*pubbenivāsānussati*), knowing other people's rebirths (*sattānamcutūpapāta*), certainty of emancipation already attained (āsavakkhayakaranāna), and clairvoyance with regard to the past and future of a living creature

(dibbacakkhu).[1] By this special wisdom the Buddha was able to know the doctrines of the previous Buddhas.

In the Dīgna-Nikāya, the following points can be gathered regarding the omniscience of the Buddha: (a) The Buddha does not deny, nor does he positively affirm his omniscience -- omniscience understood in the sense of knowing everything. (b) The Buddha does disavow omniscience in the sense of knowing all things simultaneously (c) The Buddha does not claim an unlimited pure-cognitive knowledge of the future.

> "It may happen, Cunda, that Wanderers who hold other views than ours may declare: Concerning the past Gotama the Recluse reveals an infinite knowledge, and insight, but not so concerning the future, as to the what and the why of it".[2]

(d) The Buddha owns Omniscience about the past; that is, his memory is unlimited.

> "Nor does he in the Nikāyas deny omniscience in the sense of knowing everything but not all at once. Yet it is clear that according to the earliest accounts in the Nikāyas, the Buddha did not claim (an unlimited) precognitive knowledge. In the Pāsādika Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya, it is said, 'It is possible that other heretical teachers may say "the Recluse Gotama has a limitless knowledge and vision with regard to the past but not with regard to the future"....' The Buddha goes on to explain that 'with regard to the past the Tathāgata's consciousness follows in the wake of his memory' (atītam addhānaṃ...ārabbha Tathāgatassa satānusāri vinnāṇaṃ hoti, loc. cit.). He recalls as much as he likes (so yāvatakam ākaṅkhati

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[1] Dīgha-Nikāya (ed. by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. E. Carpenter, 3 vol., PTS. London, 1890-1911), III, p. 281.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

> tāvatakaṃ anussarati, loc. cit.). 'With regard to the future the Tathāgata has the knowledge resulting from enlightenment that "this is the final birth...." This appears to be an admission that the Buddha did not claim to have (at least an unlimited) precognitive knowledge of the future".[3]

(e) With regard to the future the Buddha claims to know that this was his last birth. Having once attained enlightenment he would not be born again.

> "With regard to the future, the Tathāgata has the knowledge resulting from enlightenment that 'this is his final birth".[4]

(f) The Buddha's knowledge is supposedly superior to that of Brahmā in that the latter did not, or could not, know what the former knew.

> "The Great Brahmā, the Supreme One, the Mighty One, the All-seeing One, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Controller, the Creator, the Chief of all, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are to be" could not answer.[5]

In the Majjhima-Nikāya "sabbannū" (omniscient) and "sabba-dassāvi" (all seeing) were two controversial attributes at the time of the Buddha. These two terms are mentioned in a list of epithets falsely attributed to the Mahāvīra, the Jaina teacher:

> "Vaccha, those who speak thus: the recluse Gotama is all knowing (sabbannū) and all seeing (sabbadassāvi); he claims all-embracing knowledge-and-vision, saying:

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[3]K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1963), p. 469.

[4]Dīgha-Nikāya, III, p. 134.

[5]Ibid., I, p. 220.

> 'Whether I am walking, standing still or asleep or awake, knowledge-and-vision is permanently and continuously before me' -- these are not speaking of me in accordance with what has been said, but they are misrepresenting me with what is untrue, not fact".[6]

However, the Buddha mentions that omniscience in the above sense is impossible:

> "King Pasenadi spoke thus to the Lord: "I have heard this about you, revered sir: 'The recluse Gotama speaks thus: There is neither a recluse nor a brahman who, all-knowing, all seeing, can claim all-embracing knowledge-and-vision -- this situation does not exist".

Further, the Buddha says:

> "Those, sire, who speak thus...do not speak as I spoke".

He continues:

> "I, sire, claim to have spoken the words thus: There is neither a a recluse nor a brahman who at one and the same time can know all, can see all -- this situation does not exist".[7]

Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether he was omniscient, like the Mahāvīra, who was claimed to possess a constant of everything:

> "As to this, Sandaka, some teacher, all-knowing, all-seeing, claims all-embracing knowledge-and-vision, saying: 'Whether I am walking or standing still or asleep or awake, knowledge-and-vision is constantly and perpetually before me".[8]

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[6] Majjhima-Nikāya (translated by I. B. Homer, 1967), p. 482.

[7] "Natthi so samano vā brāhmano vā vo sakideva sabbān nāssati sabbam dakkhiti n'etan thānam vijjati". Majjhima N., op. cit., II, p. 127.

[8] Majjhima-Nikāya, op. cit., I, p. 482.

The Buddha refuses this type of omniscience. Further, he says that what is claimed for the Jain leader is not true:

> "He enters an empty place, and he does not obtain almsfood, and a dog bites him, and he encounters a fierce elephant, and he encounters a fierce horse, and he encounters a fierce bullock, and he asks a woman and a man their name and clan, and he asks the name of a village or a market town and the way".[9]

The Buddha has claimed only "threefold-knowledge (tisso vijjā) for himself. He knows about the past birth of anyone:

> "For I, Vaccha, whenever I please, recollect a variety of former habitations, that is to say one birth, two births,...thus do I recollect diverse former habitations in all their modes and details".

He knows everything about the present life of a person:

> "For I, Vaccha, whenever I please, with the purified deva-vision surpassing that of men...see beings as they pass hence and come to be; I comprehend that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going, according to the consequences of deeds".

He knows the future birth of anybody:

> "And I, Vaccha, by the destruction of the cankers, having realised here and now by my own super-knowledge the freedom of mind and the freedom of wisdom that are cankerless, entering thereon, abide therein".[10]

In the Majjhima-Nikāya we find a list of a hundred attributes of the

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[9] Ibid., I, p. 519.

[10] Ibid., I, p. 482.

Buddha, but the epithet "sabbannū" and "sabbadassāvi" are conspicuous by their absence.[11]

In the Samyutta-Nikāya the Buddha has been worshipped as the highest and holiest person.[12] He is the wisest teacher of gods and men, because he has conquered all the power of darkness.[13] He himself declares that knowledge has arisen in him:

> "It has arisen in me! It has arisen in me! O brothers. I have been blessed with the eye by which I can observe things which have not been taught before. Knowledge has arisen in me, insight has arisen in me, wisdom has arisen in me, light has arisen in me".[14]

In the Samyutta-Nikāya there is a parable of Simasapa leaves. This parable is very revealing, although very easily misunderstood, with regard to the Buddha's omniscience. The Buddha takes a handful of leaves and says that what he has taught is like the leaves in his hand, and what he did not teach is like the leaves in the forest.

> "Just so, monks, much more in number are those things I have found out, but not revealed; very few are the things I have revealed. And why, monks, have I not revealed them?
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> "Because they are not concerned with profit, they are not rudiments of the holy life, they conduce not to revlusion, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquility, to full comprehension, to the perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna. That is why I have not revealed them".[15]

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[11] Ibid., I, p. 482.

[12] Samyutta-Nikāya (translated by F. L. Woodward, 1925), I, p. 47.

[13] Ibid., I, pp. 50, 132.

[14] Ibid., 12, 1, 10.

[15] Ibid., V, 437.

Certain significant implications could be drawn from this parable of the Simasapa leaves. In the first place, it is obvious that the Buddha claims to know much more than he actually taught. But to claim to know much more than one teaches is not the same as claiming omniscience. Infinity of knowledge and omniscience are logically two things; the former is possible without the latter. Also, the Buddha contends that his knowledge could not be doubted or challenged by an ordinary man ruled by passions. This, again, does not in fact imply that the Buddha was claiming omniscience, or that Buddha was wrong in according indubitability to his knowledge which was not omniscient. Knowledge of the dharma is possible without omniscience.

The Buddha reprimandingly warns a monk who was doubting his teaching of dharma:

> "It is possible that some senseless fellow, sunk in ignorance and led astray by craving, may think to go beyond the Master's teaching...."[16]

In the Aṅguttara-Nikāya the Buddha has been considered superior to all the other beings because he has acquired knowledge of the ultimate truth. However, he is neither a god, nor a semi-divine being nor a man.[17]

There is a parable in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya where the monk Uttarā compares the Buddha's teachings with a granary.

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[16] Samyuttara-Nikāya, op. cit., III, 103.

[17] Aṅguttara-Nikāya (translated by E. M. Hare, London, 1961), II, 38.

> "If there is a granary in the vicinity of a village or hamlet and people were to carry grain in pingoes, baskets, in their robes and hands...then if one were to ask the question 'from where are you carrying this grain', the proper reply would be to say that it was from this large granary".

Further, he concludes that whatever words are spoken by him are only an echo of the words of the Buddha:

> "Even so, whatever is well-spoken is the word of the Exalted One".[18]

This parable involves a profound intent, although in a simple form, for here also the infinity of the Buddha's knowledge may be easily confused with his omniscience. In this parable, Uttarā accepts the superiority of the Buddha's knowledge and compares the Buddha with a large granary where one could collect grains according to the capacity and the space of his basket. Also, the fact that the Buddha's teachings are acknowledged as well-spoken does not imply that it is all that could be spoken, or that it is all that the Buddha would speak, or that the Buddha is omniscient.

Although the Aṅguttara-Nikāya is significantly silent on the matter of the omniscience of the Buddha, it explicitly ascribes six intellectual powers and three-fold knowledge to him. The Buddha knows: (a) What is possible as possible. (b) What is impossible as impossible. (c) The effects according to their conditions and causes. (d) Performance of karma in the past, present and future. (e) Corruption and perfection. (f) Concentration and attainment of nirvāṇa.

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[18] Ibid., IV, 164.

> "While the Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta mentioned that the Tathagata had a three-fold knowledge, we find it mentioned in one place in the Aṅguttara that 'there are six intellectual powers of the Tathāgata' (cha yimāni... Tathāgatassa Tathāgatabalāni, A. III. 417). The six constitute, in addition to the three-fold knowledge, the following: (i) 'the Tathāgata knows, as it really is, what is possible as possible and what is impossible as impossible' (...Tathāgato thanan ca thānato atthānan ca atthānato yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, loc. cit.), (ii) 'the Tathāgata knows as it really is, the effects according to their conditions and causes, of the performance of karma in the past, present and future' (...Tathāgato atitanāgatapaccupannānaṃ kammasamādānānaṃ ṭhānaso hetuso vipākaṃ yathābhūtaṃ hajānāti, loc. cit.), and (iii) 'the Tathāgata knows, as it really is, the corruption, perfection and arising from contemplative states of release, concentration and attainment' (...Tathāgato jhānavimokkhasamādhisamāpattinaṃ saṃkilesaṃ vodānaṃ vuṭṭhanaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, loc. cit.)".[19]

Sutta-Nipāta does not attribute the concept of omniscience to the Buddha. However, it accepts him as the perceiver of everything, because he is an all-enlightened sage.[20] He is an all-seeing one who removes all darkness,[21] and he has proclaimed the doctrine of the truth on earth.[22]

In the Vinaya Pitaka, it is said that the Buddha has become the embodiment of vision, not only this, but also he has become

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[19] K. N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, op. cit., pp. 469-470.

[20] Sutta-Nipāta (ed. D. Anderson and X. Smith, P.T.S., London, 1948), 541.

[21] Ibid., 956.

[22] Ibid., 993.

knowledge, dhamma and even Brahmā, etc. It is also said that there are some disciples who have become the embodiment of reason.

The Kathāvatthu of Abhidhamma-Pitaka, which goes one step further than the Dīggha-Nikāya and Majjhima-Nikāya, attributes omniscience to the Buddha: "Conqueror, Master, Buddha Supreme, All-knowing (Sabbannā), All-seeing (Sabbadassāvi), Lord of the Norm, Fountain-head of the Norm".[23]

The Patisambhidā-Magga clarifies the nature of omniscience attributed to the Buddha: "What is meant by the omniscience of the Tathāgata" (katamam Tathāgatassa sabbannutānām 131). Omniscience consists in "knowing everything conditioned and unconditioned without remainder" (sabbam sankhatam assankhatam anavasosam jānāti ti, 131) and in "knowing everything in the past, present and future" (atītam...anāgatam...paccuppannam sabbam jānāti ti, p. 131). The passage continues giving the components of the Buddha's omniscience, the last of which is "he knows everything that has been seen, heard, sensed, thought, attained, sought and searched by the minds of those who inhabit the entire world of gods and men" (Yāvatā sadevakassa lokassa...dittham sutam mutam vinnātam patjam pariyesitam anuvicaritam manasā sabbam jānāti., 131).[24]

The Niddesa, the eleventh book of the Khuddaka-Nikāya, goes positively further than the earlier claims of the Pāli Nikāyas. The

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[23] Kathā Vatthu, III, 1, translated by S. Z. Aung and Mrs. R. Davids, 1969.

[24] K. N. Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 380.

earlier Pāli Nikāyas maintain that it is impossible to know all things all at once. It is still conceded that the Buddha's omniscience is not like that of the Mahāvīra. It is said that the knowledge of each and every thing is constantly present in the mind of the Mahāvīra. Although the omniscience of the Buddha is not like that of the Mahāvīra, it is accepted that the Buddha can encompass the whole within his consciousness. The all-seeing eyes of the Buddha are called omniscience. Nothing remains unseen by the Buddha, because he possesses the all-seeing eyes.[25]

In the Udāna the Buddha's omniscience has been given three meanings. They are as follows: (a) That the Buddha knows more than the ordinary people do. (b) That the Buddha's knowledge surpasses the knowledge of other recluses, Brahmans and wanderers. (c) That the Buddha's knowledge is not partial, but is total and the whole vision of reality:

> "Thereupon, monks, that rājah went up to the blind men and said to each, 'Well, blind man, have you seen the elephant?' 'Yes, sire.' 'Then tell me, blind men, what sort of thing is an elephant.' Thereupon those who had been presented with the head answered, 'Sire, an elephant is like a pot.' And those who had observed an ear only replied. 'An elephant is like a winnowing-basket.'.... Then they began to quarrel, shouting, 'Yes, it is!. 'No, it is not!' 'An elephant is not that!' 'Yes, it's like that!' and so on, till they came to fisticuffs over the matter ....Just so are these Wanderers holding other views, blind, unseeing, knowing not the profitable, knowing not the unprofitable. They know not dhamma. They know not what

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> is not dhamma. In their ignorance of these things they are by nature quarrelsome, wrangling and disputatious, each maintaining it is thus and thus".[26]

The parable quoted above represents a fact, both logical and historical. Its real intent is to bring home the consequences when false claims to omniscience are made. The claims for omniscience were made by almost all the religious teachers of India, and yet the claims were mutually incompatible, even contradictory. In true omniscience the awareness that dhamma is such and such, and only such and such, is not possible. And this is exactly what all the wanderers did. The implication of the parable is that the wanderers claimed universality for a knowledge which actually was partial. 'Dhamma is such and such, dhamma is not such and such'.[27]

The Jātakas

The concept of omniscience can also be traced in the Jātakas. There is a description of an ascetic having divine wisdom who therefore was able to know the doings of his friend.[28] Here the word omniscience has been used in the sense of having an extraordinary ability of sight. Again it is said in praise of omniscience that the eye of an omniscient one is more valued than an ordinary eye with its capacity increased a hundred times (sabbannūtanāṇakkhim).[29]

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[26] Udāna (Khuddaka Nikāya), 68-69, translated by F. W. Woodward, 1948.

[27] Ibid., 67.

[28] The Jātaka (ed. V. Fausboll, 6 vols., London, 1895-1907), II, 412.

[29] Ibid., IV, 407.

It is interesting to note that in the Jātakas, words spoken or recited in verses by a person qualified by omniscience are regarded as highly as the words of the omniscient Buddha.[30] Further, metaphors and similes are used freely to express the power of omniscience. Consequently, in the Jātakas there are found very lively, positive characterizations of the omniscient Buddha.[31] The Omniscient knows how best to deal with all creatures, he is capable of performing highly uncommon deeds and is capable of reading other minds from a long distance.[32] He is filled with compassion and mercy, truth and patience, tranquillity and wisdom, discernment and knowledge, etc. The omniscient person is the highest among the world of men and Gods; he knows things which exist, have existed and will exist.[33]

Milindapañha

According to the Milindapañha, the Buddhas have eighteen characteristics (dhammas). They possess the highest knowledge, because they become free from the mental obsessions (khīṇāsava). In this text a question is raised with regard to (a) whether the

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[30] Ibid., V, 484.

[31] Ibid., I, 321.

[32] Ibid., VI, 314.

[33] Ibid., I, 335.

Buddha was omniscient and (b) to what extent. The Buddha's omniscience is affirmed, but not in the sense that his insight of all things was present all at once. That is, the Buddha's omniscience did not consist in his knowledge of all things being consciously and constantly present before him. The Buddha's omniscience is said to be dependent on the inclination (āvajjanā) of the Buddha himself, that is, the Buddha could know anything anytime provided he wanted to know. The question may arise concerning whether the very claim for omniscience is lost if the Buddha had to seek omniscience. The objection is over-ruled on the grounds (a) that the Buddhas have ten powers, (b) that they are endowed with the eighteen characteristics of the Buddha, (c) that their thinking power is brought into operation quickly and with ease, (d) and that the all-embracing knowledge of the Buddha is faster than the opening or shutting of the eyes.[31]

Was the Buddha Considered Omniscient in the Pāli Nikāyas?

In the earliest Pāli Nikāyas, for example the Sūtta-Pitaka, we scarcely get a clear and positive establishment of the omniscience of the Buddha as it has been maintained by the later Buddhist literature. We have already seen that in the Majjhima-Nikāya the Buddha has condemned the Jaina's concept of omniscience attributed to his contemporary Jaina teacher the Mahāvīra. Because of the ambiguity regarding the concept of omniscience in the early Pāli Nikāyas, modern thinkers are divided into two groups concerning the

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[34]Milindapañha, pp. 102 f. [Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids under the title The Question of King Milinda (Oxford University Press, 1925).]

the nature of this attribute of the Buddha. According to one group the omniscience of Buddha is accepted in the early Pāli *Nikāyas*. In the view of the other group of thinkers, the early Pāli *Nikāyas* do not establish the omniscience of Buddha. Here, we intend to examine the arguments of these two groups of modern thinkers on this issue.

Some modern scholars have asserted emphatically that the Buddha has been accepted as an omniscient religious teacher in the Pāli *Nikāyas*. The arguments in support of the omniscience of the Buddha have been presented by Kern, Oldenberg, Keith and Poussin. They have argued in favour of the idea of the omniscience of the Buddha in the early Pāli *Nikāyas* in order to prove that early Buddhism is an authoritarian religion preached by an omniscient religious teacher, that is, the Buddha.

Now it is important to re-examine the above-mentioned passages to find out whether omniscience is attributed to the Buddha or whether He has declared himself to be omniscient. In order to establish the concept of omniscience in the early Pāli *Nikāyas*, we should not follow modern interpreters blindly, but we should go to the original sources for our evidence. The omniscience of the Buddha cannot be established in the early Pāli *Nikāyas* on the basis of textual evidence.

Now, we should start with the view of H. Kern. He holds that:

> "The Buddha is the adept in the wisdom of Buddhism (Bodhijnāna), whose first duty, so long as he remains on earth, is to communicate his wisdom to those who are willing to receive it. These willing

> learners are the "Bodhisattvas", so called from their hearts being inclined to the wisdom of Buddhism, and "Sanghas", from their companionship with one another, and with their Buddha or teacher, in the Vihāras on coenobitical establishments. The Bodhisattva or Sangha continues to be such until he has surmounted the very last grade of that vast and laborious ascent by which he is instructed that he can "scale the heavens", and pluck immortal wisdom from its resplendent source: which achievement performed, he becomes a Buddha, that is, an Omniscient being".[35]

Oldenberg also observes that the concept of the omniscience of the Buddha is found in the early Pāli Nikāyas:

> One night, the old traditions narrate, the decisive turning point came, the moment wherein was vouchsafed to the seeker the certainty of discovery. Sitting under the tree, since then named the Tree of Knowledge, he went through successively purer and purer stages of abstraction of consciousness, until the sense of omniscient illumination came over him: in all-piercing intuition he pressed on to apprehend the wanderings of spirits in the mazes of transmigration, and to attain the knowledge of the sources whence flows the suffering of the world, and of the path which leads to the extinction of this suffering.[36]

Poussin argued for the omniscience of the Buddha in the Pāli Nikāyas when addressing the third international congress of religions: "He is anxious to show in this paper that 'Buddhism is contradiction itself' and that 'it has been no happier in making out a comprehensive

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[35]Cited from H. Kern in his introduction to the translation of Saddharma-Puṅdarīka, p. xxxv, by. B. H. Hodgson, Essays on the Language, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, p. 62.

[37]Hermann Oldenberg, Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order, p. 107.

theory of the relations between faith, reason and intuition' (*loc. cit.*). He says that 'Buddhism was at the same time a faith in revealed truths and a philosophical intuition' (*op. cit.*, p. 33) and makes the following observations: 'documents and theories point to conflicting statements: the old Buddhism pretends and rightly to be a creed. But it admits the principle of '*libre examen*'; still more it considers critical inquiry as the one key to the comprehension of truth....' (*loc. cit.*). 'Buddhism is a faith and a creed, a respectful and close adhesion to the world of the one Omniscient' (*op. cit.*, p. 34). He adds, 'innumerable are the documents which establish this point' (*loc. cit.*), but not a single reference is given to the Pāli Canon where it is said or implied that the Buddha was omniscient. He does not make it clear whether on his view the Buddha claimed to be omniscient and/or was acclaimed omniscient by his disciples, though he holds that at least the latter is true: 'according to his disciples the Buddha alone knows everything....' (*loc. cit.*)".[38]

But it is notable that Poussin did not establish the omniscience of Buddha on the basis of textual evidence from the Pāli *Nikāyas*. He proves the omniscience of the Buddha on the basis of Milindapañha,[39] where 'omniscient' is said to be an epithet of the Tathāgata. However, Poussin has given other, more satisfactory, quotations in

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[38]K. N. Jayatilleke, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 377.

support of his thesis regarding the omniscience of the Buddha. Yet he has failed to trace out the chronological order and overlooks the fact that the Milindapanha was written in the first century B.C. and the Pāli Nikāyas were written in the fifth or sixth century B.C., soon after the death of Buddha. Thus we cannot establish the omniscience of the Buddha in early Pāli Nikāyas on the basis of statements made in the Milindapanho, even though the original Milindapanho was written in the Pāli language. Only on the basis of linguistic similarities between the Milindapanho and the Pāli Nikāyas, we cannot argue for the omniscience of the Buddha in the Pāli Nikāyas because there is probably a gap of four or five hundred years between these two works.

Keith establishes the omniscience of the Buddha in the light of the textual evidences of the Pāli Nikāyas. In these texts the omniscience of Buddha is established in two ways. Either the Buddha claims the omniscience for Himself or He was attributed with omniscience by his disciples. The main sources quoted by Keith are Pāsādika Suttanta, Kevaddha Sutta and Anguttara Nikāya.

On the basis of Pāsādika Suttanta,[40] A. B. Keith holds the Buddha to be omniscient, although he has more capacity to know the past things in comparison to the future things.

> On the contrary, the Tathāgata, while able to remember all the past, has enlightenment as to the future to the effect: "This is the last birth; there is no more coming to be." Nor does the Tathāgata reveal all

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[40] Dīgha Nikāya, op. cit., III, 134 ff.

> that is past; what is not true, what is not fact, what does not redound to the good of mankind, he leaves alone; nor does he reveal what is true, what is fact, but what does not redound to good; but he reveals what redounds to the benefit of man desirous of salvation, both as regards the past, the present, and the future. He knows whatever throughout the world is discerned, striven for, accomplished, or devised, by gods or men; all that he spoke between his enlightenment and his passing away was true; and he does according to his word, as his word is according to his going, he is styled Tathāgata.[41]

There is a reference in Anguttara-Nikāya where the Buddha is compared to a granary, from which men gather good teachings as they collect grains from a granary. In the Kevaddha-Sutta, Buddha claimed superiority in wisdom even to Brahmā because he claims to know the answer of a question which is not known even to Brahmā. Again, we have a parable of the elephant and the blind men. In the parable of the elephant it is said that there is always something lacking in human wisdom; therefore one must refer to an omniscient being in order to achieve liberation. On the basis of these two examples, Keith remarks that Buddhism is "a faith and creed".

The text Kevaddha-Sutta shows that the Buddha is able to answer the question which was unanswerable for Brahmā, but we cannot draw the conclusion that the Buddha is omniscient because, unlike Brahmā, he was able to answer the question. The Buddha does

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[41]A. B. Keith, Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 44. Also cited by Keith in footnote 2 are: JRAS, 1898, pp. 103 ff., 865 ff.; AJP XXXII, p. 205; Franke, DN, p. 287; Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, p. 133, Np. 2.

not claim to be omniscient while answering the question. We have already seen that in the early Pāli *Nikāyas* the Buddha is claimed to have some supernatural power to know some supersensuous things, but is not acclaimed omniscient. The inferiority of Brahmā can be traced from the beginning of the Pāli *Nikāyas*, especially in the *Kevaddha-Sutta*. After obtaining enlightenment, he wanted to enter *Nirvāṇa*. At that time Brahmā appeared before him and requested him to preach the *dharma* to mankind. Here Brahmā is also ignorant regarding the concept of *Nirvāṇa*. This text establishes that Brahmā is inferior to Buddha regarding the knowledge of the supersensuous realities like *dharma*. However, the *Kevaddha-Sutta* maintains that Buddha has three-fold knowledge, but it does not establish his omniscience.

Now we come to the parable of the blind man and the elephant in the *Kevaddha-Sutta*. This parable, too, fails to establish the omniscience of Buddha. The conclusion that we may derive is that the other teachers have a partial vision of reality. By implication it seems that only the Buddha had perfect vision of reality but it does not establish his omniscience as Keith holds. If only on the ground of his assertions that he had the clear vision of reality the Buddha is regarded as the omniscient religious teacher, then every religious teacher who claims to have the thorough vision of reality also should be regarded as an omniscient person. But this is not the case. Thus we see that Keith has taken the statements out of context, for they do not claim that the Buddha is omniscient.[42]

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[42] K. N. Jayatilleke, *op. cit.*, pp. 379 f.

It is not proper to establish the omniscience of the Buddha on the basis of such uncertain evidence when we have already a positive statement made by the Buddha himself in the Majjhima-Nikāya[43] rejecting his omniscience. He flatly condemns the attributes of omniscience attributed to the Mahāvīra, and accepts 'a three-fold knowledge', which can be acquired by others also. It is evident that until the composition of the Vibhaṅga the Buddha was not considered omniscient. Here we find a detailed account of his supernatural knowledge but there is no mention of omniscience. The Nikāyas also gives a long list of the Buddha's qualities but there is no mention of omniscience or similar attributes.[44] Thus on the basis of the above arguments we cannot accept the omniscience of the Buddha on the basis of the evidence available in the Pāli Nikāyas.

Nalināksha Dutt also holds the position that the concept of the Buddha's omniscience is not openly asserted in the earliest Pāli Nikāyas.

> "Of the extraordinary spiritual powers attained by a Buddha, the Hīnayānists say very little. We have in the Nikāyas the remark that Buddhas (including Paccekabuddhas) attain perfect knowledge by themselves, and by following the dharma unheard before.* A Samyaksambuddha preaches the dhamma and becomes the founder of a religion and the leader of men and the gods. He is sabbannū (omniscient)** and his knowledge in any matter whatsoever does not require any āvajjanā (reflection); he possesses ten balas, and four vesārajjas....

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[43] Majjhima-Nikāya, op. cit., I, 482.

[44] K. N. Jayatilleke, op. cit., p. 380.

> In their literature the Hīnayānists tried to prove that a Buddha is a rare being and superior to the men and the gods, but they mention also that there is hardly any distinction between an Arhat and a Buddha except that the latter is a founder and teacher of a religion.***45
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> * Footnote No. 4 in original source. Anguttara, III, p. 9; Pug. P., p. 14.
> ** Footnote No. 5 in original source. Majjhima, I, p. 482: sabbannū sabbadassāvī aparisesam nanadassanam patijānāti.
> *** Footnote No. 8 in original source. For a comparison of the Srāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas see ch. II, pp. 80-4. Dial. of Buddha, II, 1-3; III, 6.

E. J. Thomas maintains that the Buddha was not considered as an omniscient religious teacher in the Pāli Nikāyas. This attribute of omniscience was gradually attributed to the Buddha in the later works of Buddhism. When asked if he were omniscient, the Buddha claimed the last three of the ten powers, these being the three knowledges of an Arhat. At the time when Majjhima-Nikāya was compiled, the claim of the Buddha's omniscience had not been made, but later this quality was attributed to him. This claim is to be found in the latest parts of the Pāli Nikāyas as an apparent development of the doctrine of the ten powers. The difference between omniscience and the knowledge involved in the ten powers is discussed by Buddhaghoṣa in his comments on the above passage. Other schools, Buddhaghoṣa says, hold that the knowledge of the ten powers is not knowledge of the particular objects while omniscience

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[45] Nalinaksha Dutt, Aspects of Mahāyāna and Its Relation to Hīnayāna, p. 285.

is. Buddhaghoṣa does not regard this as the principle of division. Through the ten powers the Buddha knows each one's particular duty and omniscience is everything beyond this. It is infinitely extended human knowledge, which, however, does not produce freedom. The trance or magic power can be known by it, the knowledge of how to perform them is not included under it. "One might know the path, but could not thereby get rid of the depravities. That belongs to the three knowledges of the Path. They are intuitive and direct, and have to be realized".[46]

Jayatilleke also concludes that the Buddha neither claims omniscience nor has omniscience attributed to him. Further, his omniscience cannot be traced out even in the early Pāli Nikāyas until most of the books of Abhidhamma were completed:

> "But the Buddha appears to have been acclaimed omniscient in the Theravāda school sometime before the Pāli Canon was finally completed for we find such a claim made in the Patisambaidāmagga and the Kathāvatthu. The Patisambaidāmagga in its section called 'the discourse on knowledge' (naṇakathā) specifies 'what is meant by the omniscience of the Tathāgata' (katamaṃ Tathāgatassa sabbannutanaṃ, 131). It begins by saying that his omniscience consists in 'knowing everything conditioned and unconditioned without remainder' (sabbaṃ saṅkhataṃ asaṅkhataṃ anavasesaṃ jānāti ti, loc. cit.) and in 'knowing everything in the past, present and future' (atitam...anāgatam... paccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ jānāti ti loc. cit.). It then goes on to list a number of components of his omniscience, the last of which is that 'he knows everything that has been seen, heard, sensed, thought, attained, sought and

[46] E. J. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

> searched by the minds of those who inhabit the entire world of gods and men.' This is followed by the inquiry as to the sense in which the Buddha is 'all-seeing' (kenaṭṭhena samantacakkhu, op. cit., p. 133). This word (samantacakkhu) is used with a slightly different connotation from that of sabbannu and curiously enough the 'omniscience of the Buddha' comes to be classified as one of the fourteen kinds of knowledge, which constitute the knowledge of the Buddha (cp. cuddasa Buddhanānani...sabbannutannānam Buddhananaṃ, loc. cit.). Whatever this may mean, it is clear from this section that omniscience is claimed for the Buddha by disciples far removed in time from the Buddha himself. Similarly, the Kathāvatthu urges as a matter of common belief that the Buddha is omniscient (sabbannū) and all-seeing (sabbadassāvi). These two epithets occur in a list of eight epithets (Tathāgato, Jino, Satthā, Sammā-sambuddho Sabbannū, Sabbadassāvi Dhammassāmi Dhammapaṭisaraṇo, Kvu. 228) five of which (see footnotes) are found in the Sutta Pitaka as regular epithets of the Buddha.
>
> It may be concluded from the above that neither did the Buddha claim omniscience nor was omniscience acclaimed of the Buddha until the very latest stratum in the Pāli Canon and that it was even after most of the books of the Abhidhamma had been complete.[47]

We have already examined the quotable references regarding the omniscience of the Buddha from the Majjhima-Nikāya of Sutta-Pitaka. Buddha has not claimed the supreme authority for his teachings by virtue of his omniscience. Again, it has been also established that he did not receive his knowledge of dharma from any other omniscient religious teacher or divine being.

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[47]K. N. Jayatilleke, op. cit., pp. 380-381.

The Mahāvīra, the religious teacher of the Jainas, was roughly a contemporary of the Buddha. The Mahāvīra was accepted by his followers as omniscient in the sense of having knowledge of each and every thing of the universe, at each individual moment, while standing or walking, sleeping or awake. In his life the Buddha himself was asked by his disciples whether he was an omniscient religious teacher like the Mahāvīra. He replied that the type of omniscience which was attributed to the Mahāvīra was ridiculous as well as impossible, and that those who claimed that they had this kind of knowledge were in error. There is no doubt that the Buddha admitted possessing supernatural power of knowing supersensuous realities which are not known by normal human cognition. He had the power to remember the past and future births of anyone if he so desired. Moreover, he was able to know everything in the present because of his removal from the hindrances of knowledge (āsavas).[48]

The ideal of Hinayāna Buddhism is Arhathood, which is attained by the removal of the hindrance of affliction (Kleśāvarana). An Arhat is essentially self-centred, caring only for his own liberation, and having no concern for the liberation of other people. A Buddha, on the other hand, foregoes his own liberation for the sake of others. He takes a vow that he will not enter liberation until the whole world is liberated.[49] This distinction is clearly implied in

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[48] Majjhima-Nikāya, op. cit., I, 482.

[49] Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva (ed. Poussin, Bib., Ind., 1902), 8, 108.

the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, where the Buddha is called the originator of the path, the perceiver of the unknown path and preacher of the unpreached path.[50] In other words, he has discovered a way by which one can be liberated, has realized this unique path by his self-effort in the *samādhi* and has taught this means of liberation to others, as it had never been taught before.

> The question is raised in *Majjhima*, iii, 8, whether there is a monk endowed in every way with the qualities that the Lord possesses. The only difference there mentioned is that the Lord was the originator of the Path, and the preacher of the Path that had not been preached.[51]

A further development in the growth of the concept of *Buddhahood* in Mahāyāna was that the Buddha was considered the possessor of "ten-powers" (*daśabala*). Rather than being a new idea, this was development of ascription of superhuman powers to an *Arhat* in Pāli *Nikāyas*.

> (1) He knows what is possible as possible, and what is impossible as impossible.
>
> (2) He knows the ripening of *karmas*, past, present, and future.
>
> (3) He knows whither all paths (of conduct) lead.
>
> (4) He knows the many and various elements or factors of the world (existence).
>
> (5) He knows the various intentions of individuals.
>
> (6) He knows the faculties of other beings, whether quick or slow, etc.

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[50] *Majjhima Nikāya*, *op. cit.*, III, 8.

[51] E. J. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

(7) He knows the impurity, purity, and growth of the trances, releases, concentrations, and attainments.

(8) He knows numberless former existences.

(9) With his divine eye he sees beings passing away and being reborn according to their karma.

(10) With the destruction of the āsavas he has of himself attained and realized release of mind and knowledge in this life and abides in it.[52]

These supernatural powers of a Buddha are only the developments of the qualities of an Arhat.

We have seen above in the Pāli Nikāyas that the Buddha was not originally conceived of as an omniscient religious teacher, as he was in the later works of early Buddhism or in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is true that in the later period of the Pāli Nikāyas (Vinaya-Pitaka and Abhidhamma-Pitaka) the Buddha was given the attribute omniscient, but in the earliest Pāli Nikāyas (Sutta-Pitaka) the Buddha was not depicted as an omniscient religious teacher. Undoubtedly, he was thought to have some power to apprehend supernatural things, like the actions in the previous life of an individual, everything in his present life and the results that those actions would have on his future life. In the Sutta-Pitaka the attribute of omniscience was not claimed by the Buddha nor was it claimed for him by his disciples, even though the contemporaneous Jaina teacher, the Mahāvīra, had claimed omniscience for himself and had been called omniscient by his

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[52] E. J. Thomas, op. cit., p. 149. Cf. Majjhima-Nikāya, i, 69; Dhs., 76; Mvyut., 7; commentary in Vibhaṅga, 335-344.

disciples.

It seems that it was the result of the religious controversies between Jainism and Buddhism and also because of the influence of the Vedic tradition that the concept of omniscience arose in the later part of Pāli Nikāyas and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the Buddha was gradually accepted as an omniscient religious teacher. This might have been done to make Buddhism a more convincing religion and to make the teachings of the Buddha the only true dharma. Because the Buddha himself was omniscient he was therefore able to know the true nature of dharma.

The concept of omniscience seems to have been developed because of religious controversies rather than philosophical disputes. Buddhism was a missionary religion and at the time of Asoka, that is, the third century B.C., it had crossed the border of India and spread to central Asia. In order to make the peaceful spread of Buddhism easier, it was essential that the founder of Buddhism be considered omniscient since he was not a divine incarnation. In the case of divine incarnation the people have blind faith, but in order to develop faith in a human being as a religious teacher, that human being must be considered omniscient.

CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF OMNISCIENCE IN MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

In the previous chapter, we have seen that the Buddha was not regarded as an omniscient religious teacher in the early texts of Hīnayāna Buddhism. However, in the later works of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism he is considered as an omniscient religious teacher. Mahāyāna Buddhism conceives omniscience as an essential attribute of the Buddha. The Buddha is omniscient because of his enlightenment (bodhi). In this chapter, we will attempt to describe the concept of human omniscience as understood in the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist literature.

The Mahāyānists hold that the knowledge and power of a Buddha are far superior to those of an Arhat who is the ideal of Hīnayāna Buddhism. A Buddha, according to them, is omniscient on account of the removal of both the hindrances of affliction (kleśāvaraṇa) and cognition (jñeyāvaraṇa), while an Arhat is not, because he removes only Kleśāvaraṇa.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism the Buddha is held to be a free phenomenal Being. Just like the Tīrthaṅkaras of the Jainas, he is considered to be God. He possesses all powers, knowledges, acts, etcetera. He has removed all his passions, actions and true obscurations of affliction and cognition. He is omniscient because he has complete knowledge of the Absolute Reality and empirical world. Apart from his omniscience the Buddha possesses ten powers (daśabala), four confidences (catvāri vaiśāradyāni), and thirty-two compassions (dvātriṁśat mahākaruṇāḥ).

Buddha is Bhagavān, God, endowed as he is with power and perfection. He possesses, in entirety, all power, splendour, fame, wealth, knowledge and act.* He has completely eliminated all passion and karma and the two obscurations (kleśāvaraṇa and jñeyāvaraṇa).** He is omniscient (sarvajña and sarvākārajña), having a full knowledge of the Absolute Truth (prajñā-paramitā) and of the empirical world likewise. His wisdom is spoken of as consisting of five varieties: (1) "The perfectly pure intuition of the Absolute, there being no bifurcation into the 'is' and the 'is not' (advaya-jñānaṁ); (2) the knowledge resembling a mirror wherein everything is reflected (ādarsa-jnāna); (3) the discriminative knowledge precisely cognising all the separate objects and elements without confounding any of them (pratyavekṣaṇājñāna); (4) the cognition of the unity, the equality of oneself and of others as possessed by the unique Essence of Buddhahood (samatājñāna); and (5) the active wisdom pursuing the welfare of all living beings (kṛtyanusṭhānajñāna)".** The first two forms of knowledge, especially the first, belong to the Dharmakāya of the Buddha; the third and the fourth (pratyavekṣaṇā and samatājñāna) to the Sambhoga Kāya (body of Bliss) and the pursuit of the welfare of beings to the Nirmāṇakāya (Apparitional Body). Besides omniscient knowledge, Buddha possesses several other perfections such as Ten Powers -- (daśabala),*** Four confidences (catvāri vaiśāradyāni), Thirty-two mercies (dvātriṁsat mahākaruṇāḥ), etc.[1]

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*Footnote No. 1 in original source.
"aiśvaryasya samagrasya rūpasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ;
jñānasyātha prayatnasya ṣannāṁ bhaga iti śrutiḥ".
so'syāstīti samagraiśvaryādimān Bhagayān.
"kleśa-karma tathā janma kleśajñeyāvṛtī tathā;
yena vaipakṣikā bhagnās teneha bhagavān smṛtah".
AAA. p. 9.

**Footnote No. 2 in original source. Obermiller's The Doctrine of Prajñāpāramitā, p. 45. Acta Orientalia, vol. XI.

***Footnote No. 3 in original source.
Mahāvyutpatti, pp. 2-4 (B. Budd. Edn.).

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[1]T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 280.

Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka

The *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka* establishes the concept of human omniscience as well as the omniscience of the Buddha to prove the religious authority of his teachings of *Dharma*. It holds the doctrine that every individual can attain the state of omniscient Buddhahood. Here we find a very clear distinction between the schools of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism. This distinction is based on two different manners of teaching *Dharma* set forth by the Buddha. It maintains that the Buddha advocated different types of teaching of the *Dharma* as an expedient resort (*upāya-kausalya*). His main aim was to attract the people of lower intellect towards his teaching of the *Dharma* leading to liberation. Only with this view in mind he taught the doctrine of Hīnayāna. The doctrine of Hīnayāna does not reveal the whole truth. Here he has taught the "Four Noble Truths" (*catvāri ārya-satyāni*), the "Noble Eight Fold Path" (*ārya-aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*), the doctrine of "Dependent Origination" (*pratītyasamutpāda*), the doctrine of soullessness (*pudgala-śūnyatā*) and thirty-seven *bodhipakṣīya dharmas* to remove the hindrance of affliction (*kleśāvaraṇa*). By following these teachings of *Dharma*, a person can reach only the state of Arhathood.

However, the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism go further than the teachings of Hīnayāna Buddhism by prescribing a further spiritual discipline leading to the state of omniscience and to the Buddhahood. According to the *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka*, an *Arhat* has to practice the spiritual discipline of the *Bodhisattvas* in order to become an omniscient Buddha. Furthermore, he has to realize the voidness of elements (*dharma-śūnyatā*) and the identity of all the elements (*dharma-samatā*)

which would remove the hindrance of cognition (jñeyāvaraṇa). Then he would become a perfect enlightened (samyak-saṁbuddha) omniscient religious teacher.

The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka holds that the different paths (yāna) are only an expedient resort of the Buddha leading to omniscience and perfect Buddhahood. This distinction of Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and Boddhisattvayāna is only from a practical point of view. Really there is only one path named as the Buddhayāna which leads to the state of omniscience and to the perfect Buddhahood. The Buddha has taught the Dharma to all beings by means of only the Buddhayāna which finally leads to omniscience.[2]

The omniscient Buddha teaches the Dharma to all beings of the five states of existence, who are followers of either Mahāyāna, Pratyeka-Buddhayāna or Śrāvakayāna according to their particular disposition. Really there are not three paths (yāna). In fact, the different beings act in various ways. On this ground the Buddha has declared that there are three paths (yāna).[3] Really there is only one path (yāna), viz., the Buddhayāna; there is no second or third path

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[2] te'pi sarve śāriputra buddhā bhagavanta ekam eva yānam ārabhya sattvānāṁ dharmam deśitavantah; yadidam buddhayānam sarvajñataparyavsānam. The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, p. 27.

[3] "...tathāgatānām arhatām samyaksambuddhānāṁ sarvajñajñānacittaprabhā sarveṣu bañcagatyupapanneṣu sattveṣu yathādhimuktiṁ mahāyānikapratyeka-buddhayānikaśrāvakayānikeṣu saddharmadesanā samam pravartate....na santi kāśyapa triṇi yānāni. kevalam anyonyacaritāḥ sattvāh; tena triṇi yānāni prajñapyante". The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-Sūtra, p. 90.

(yāna).[4]

The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka holds that the ultimate goal of all the spiritual disciplines is to reach the state of omniscience. The Buddha is the master, king and lord of Dharma. The Dharma taught by the Buddha finally leads to the state of omniscience. The Buddha knows the real meaning of Dharma, because he reaches the highest perfection of knowledge, that is, omniscience. Therefore he is able to know and decide the Dharma, he can apprehend the knowledge of omniscience, he can impart the knowledge of omniscience and he can produce the knowledge of omniscience because he is perfectly enlightened.[5]

On account of his perfect wisdom, the Buddha is omniscient, knowing all and seeing all. He knows this world as well as the other worlds in their real form. He is the indicator of the path, preacher of the path, knower of the path and acquainted with the path. By hearing the Dharma taught by the Buddha a person can remove the hindrances. The removal of the hindrances ultimately leads to the state of omniscience.[6]

The Buddha has taught only one Dharma which is always the same.

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[4]"...ekamevedam yānam yaduta buddhayānam. na dvitīyam na trtiyam va yānam samvidyate". The Saddharma-Puṇḍarika Sūtra, p. 91.

[5]dharma-svāmī kāśyapa tathāgatah sarva-dharmāṇām rājā prabhur vasi....(tathopanikṣipati) yathā te dharmāh sarvajñabhūmiṁ eva gacchanti ....sarvadharmārtha-vaśitāprāptah sarvadharmādhyāśayaprāptaḥ sarvadharmaviniścayakauśalya jñānaparamapāramitaprāptaḥ. sarvajñajñānasaṁdarśakaḥ sarvajñajñānāvatārakaḥ sarvajñajñānopanikṣepakaḥ kāśyapa tathāgato'rhan samyak-saṁbuddhaḥ". The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, p. 84.

[6]Ibid., pp. 84-5.

The essence of Dharma is liberation, it is free from passion and annihilation and it ends with the knowledge of omniscience (sarvajñajñānaparyavasānah). This knowledge of omniscience is not revealed all of a sudden. The state of omniscience is reached by following the Dharma taught by the Buddha.[7]

That person is called omniscient who knows the five transcendental faculties. Those who are desirous to achieve the state of omniscience should remove ignorance. By removing ignorance one would become omniscient and acquire the knowledge of Dharma and the five transcendental faculties. Without reaching the state of omniscience, liberation is not possible.[8]

Daśabhūmikasūtra

The Daśabhūmikasūtra also accepts the concept of human omniscience. A Bodhisattva enters the tenth Bhūmi (stage) named Dharmameghā or Parama-Vihāra after crossing the ninth Bhūmi, through his practice of yoga. In this Bhūmi he obtains the knowledge of the form of all things and becomes omniscient:

> A bodhisattva on completion of the duties of the ninth bhūmi passes to the tenth.* Now he masters countless samādhis, and as the result, a lotus of infinite splendour and size appears and he is found to be seated on it with an equally resplendent body and established in the samādhi of omniscience (sarvajñajñānaviśeṣābhiṣeka).** While he is thus seated on the lotus, rays come forth from the Tathāgatas and consecrate him as

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[7]Ibid., p. 85.

[8]Ibid., V, 71-75, p. 95.

a Samyaksambuddha possessed of omniscience, and hence this bhumi is called Abhisekabhūmi.

It is after the tenth bhumi that a bodhisattva becomes a Tathagata, and so the Laṅkāvatāra calls this stage Tathāgatabhūmi.**** The Śatasāhasrikā also remarks that a bodhisattva in the tenth bhumi can be called a Tathāgata.[9]

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*Footnote No. 3 in original source. The Mtu., I, p. 142, has nothing corresponding to the account of the Daśa. It mentions something connected with the Bodhisattva's descent from the Tuṣita heaven and birth in the world of mortal beings.

**Footnote No. 4 in original source. Cf. B. Bh. 24.

***Footnote No. 5 in original source. The wonders of rasmi are described here as well as in the Prajñāpāramitās and other Mahāyāna works.

****Footnote No. 4 in original source, p. 284. Sata., p. 4158. Author's Note: Sata., stands for Satasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā.

Aśvaghoṣa

In his book the Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda-Śāstra, which is translated into English as the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna, Aśvaghoṣa has accepted the concept of human omniscience. He maintains a difference between a Bodhisattva and a Buddha. A Buddha is one who has become omniscient on account of his perfect enlightenment (bodhi). A Bodhisattva is one who aspires to achieve the state of omniscience and perfect enlightenment through the following of three prescribed practices of spiritual disciplines (yoga). First, through the perfection of faith. Second, through understanding and action. Third, through intuition.[10]

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[9] Nalinaksha Dutt, Aspects of Mahāyāna and Its Relation to Hīnayāna, pp. 283-84.

[10] The Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda-Śāstra, English translation with commentary by Yoshito S. Hakeda with the title "The Awakening of Faith" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 80.

The practice of the perfection of faith produces three characteristics in the intellect. First, the intellect becomes centered in meditation upon Tathatā (suchness). Second, it becomes profoundly mature by the introduction of all kinds of unlimited good qualities into the intellect. Third, it becomes compassionate towards removing the sufferings of all beings.[11]

According to Aśvaghoṣa, the Absolute Reality (dharmatā) is one without a second and it is pure consciousness. This consciousness is conceived from two aspects. From the absolute point of view, the same consciousness is called Tathatā. From the phenomenal point of view the same consciousness is called the Saṁsāra (world) which is based on Tathāgata-Garbha.[12] The real nature of man is the Tathatā itself. However, it is associated with impurities and defilements. These impurities and defilements are removed through good actions as well as meditation upon Tathatā.[13]

Through the means of understanding and action a Bodhisattva has the correct realization of Tathatā and has no attachment for his own action. He acquires the perfect meditation upon Tathatā which is calm and free from ignorance.[14]

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[11] Ibid., p. 82.

[12] Ibid., pp. 31-36.

[13] Ibid., p. 82.

[14] Ibid., p. 86.

Through intuition a Bodhisattva realizes the Tathatā. There is no realization of any object in the intuitive realization of the Tathatā. In fact, there is only intuition into Tathatā which transcends the subject-object duality. This is also called the realization of the Dharmakāya (the cosmical body) which is identical with the Absolute Reality. The Bodhisattva becomes the highest being due to the realization of Tathatā. Then he manifests himself into the heaven named Akaniṣṭha which is the highest heaven in the world of form (rūpāvacara) according to the Buddhists. The unity of his intellect with Tathatā suddenly removes his ignorance. By the removal of his ignorance he becomes omniscient. Now he can perform supra-rational acts spontaneously and he is able to appear everywhere in the universe and can help all beings.[15]

Is it possible for the omniscient person to know the unlimited objects of the senses and minds of the innumerable beings of all the worlds? Again, there would be no thought in the mind of the omniscient person when his ignorance is destroyed. How can he be called an omniscient person in the sense of knowing each and every thing of the universe? Asvaghoṣa answers these objections by holding the view that the objects of the world are mere appearance of the Tathatā which is beyond the categories of thought. The non-omniscient person, because of his ignorance, imposes limitations on his own intellect while apprehending the objects of the world. The categories of thought do not correspond to the Absolute Reality (dharmatā). The mind of the non-omniscient

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[15] Ibid., pp. 87-89.

person is like a mirror coated with the dirt of defilements. It cannot reflect the Dharmakāya of the Buddha until it is purified. The Dharmakāya of the Buddha is omnipresent. The omniscient Buddha is free from any limitation of thought. In other words, he is free from all perverse views of thought. His intellect is pure and real. It is the very essential nature of the things. He can perceive into every corner of the universe and can illumine all the things which appear due to ignorance, because he is endowed with such great wisdom. He has the capacity of understanding the thoughts of all the beings. He can reveal the true Dharma because he is omniscient.[16]

Abhisamayālaṅkāra or Prajñā paramitopadeśaśāstraṁ intends, as described in the beginning, that the wise man should observe the path of omniscience and by remembering the meaning of the Sūtra, should blissfully reach the ten-fold religious virtue. The perfect wisdom (prajñāparamitā) is attained through the means of omniscience. The knowledge of the form of all objects (sarvākārajñatā) is attained through the knowledge of the path (margajñatā). The knowledge of the form of all the objects leads to omniscience. The excellence of omniscience is the highest wisdom which leads to Buddhahood.

According to Abhisamayālaṅkāra, a Śrāvaka removes only the veil of affliction. A Pratyekabuddha removes both the veil of affliction and cognition which is imagined by the subject only. Thus, it should be noted that only a partial veil of affliction and cognition is removed by a Pratyekabuddha. The perfect omniscience and Buddhahood is attained by

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[16] Ibid., p. 90.

the removal of the veil of affliction and cognition. Omniscience, which means the true knowledge of all things, is of two kinds: the knowledge of the objects that are near, and those that are remote.

The Bodhicaryāvatāra includes the Śrāvaka and the Pratyekabuddha in Hīnayāna Buddhism. The aim of Mahāyāna Buddhism is to reach the state of omniscience and the perfect enlightenment (buddhatva). The realization of the voidness of elements (dharma-nairātmya) removes the hindrance of cognition, which leads to omniscience and Buddhahood.[17]

Nāgārjuna

Nāgārjuna has not given an elaborate description of the omniscience of the Buddha, nor has he established his omniscience dialectically, although he describes the Buddha as a great religious teacher (śāstā). In his Mūlamadhyamaka-Kārikā, he reverentially adores the perfectly enlightened Buddha as the propounder of "dependent origination" (pratītyasamutpāda) and as the teacher of true Dharma out of compassion,[18] although he does not ascribe omniscience to him. However, this does not mean that he has rejected the omniscience of the Buddha. He starts his book Ratnāvalī with all religious fervour by saluting the omniscient Buddha who is free from all faults (defects), adorned

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[17]kleśajñeyāvrtitamah pratipakso ni śūnyatā; śīghra sarvajñatākāmī na bhāvayati tam katham. The Bodhicaryāvatāra, 9-55.

[18]yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivaṃ;
deśayāmāsa saṁbuddhas tam vande vadatāṃ varaṃ.
Mūlamdhyamaka Kārikā, 1, 2.
sarva dṛṣṭi prahāṇāya yah saddharmam adeśayat;
anukampām upādāya taṃ namasyāmi gautamaṃ.
Ibid., xxvii, 30.

with all the good qualities, and the only relative of all the beings.[19]

Vasubandhu and Sthiramati

The concept of human omniscience can also be traced in the Vijñapti-Mātratā-Siddhiḥ-Triṃśikā. In his commentary, Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣyam, Sthiramati says that Vasubandhu talks about two kinds of hindrances. The first is the hindrance of affliction (kleśāvaraṇa). The second is the hindrance of cognisable things (jñeyāvaraṇa). Frist, the hindrance of affliction is due to the false notion of the reality of the self and it is the cause of all sorts of suffering. Second, the hindrance of cognisable things is due to the false notion of the reality of the external elements and it hides the real nature of all the elements. The denial of substance (pudgala-nairātmya) and the denial of elements (dharma-nairātmya) remove the hindrances of affliction and cognisable things. The removal of the hindrances of affliction and cognisable things leads to liberation and omniscience, respectively. The affliction brings hindrance in obtaining liberation. Consequently, the destruction of the affliction leads to freedom. The hindrance of cognisable things is ignorance (ajnāna) which brings hindrance in the knowledge of all the objects. The destruction of this hindrance causes immediate intuitive and clear knowledge of all things. This is called omniscience.[20]

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[19] sarva-doṣa-vinirmuktaṃ guṇaiḥ sarvair alaṅkṛtaṃ;
praṇamya sarvajnam ahaṃ sarvā sattvaikabāndhavaṃ.
Ratnāvalī, Verse 1.

[20] pudgaladharmanairātmyapratipādanam punaḥ klesajneyāvaranaprahāṇ-ārtham....klesajneyāvaraṇaprahāṇam api mokṣasarvajnatvādhigamārtham. klesā hi mokṣaprāpterāvaranam iti, atas teṣu prahīṇesu mokṣo'dhigamyate. jnyāvaraṇam api sarvasmin jneye jnānapravṛttipratibandhabhūtam akliṣṭam

A *Śrāvaka* destroys only the hindrance of affliction. Therefore he can only obtain liberation.[21] That is to say, the destruction of the hindrance of affliction can only provide liberation, but it cannot provide omniscience, which is possible only by the removal of cognisable things. However, a Bodhisattva obtains both liberation and omniscience because he removes both the hindrances of affliction and cognisable things.[22]

Dharmakīrti

The Mīmāṁsakas hold that no being can become omniscient and can teach *Dharma*. Only the *Vedas*, no other being, not even God, can provide knowledge of supersensuous realities like *Dharma*, heaven, hell, self, rebirth and liberation, etc. Consequently, they accept the *Vedas* as the only authority for *Dharma*. Against this view of the Mīmāṁsakas, Dharmakīrti holds that a person can acquire the knowledge of supersensuous truths like *Dharma*. He further affirms that the Buddha is the only authority for *Dharma* (religious truths). In his book *Pramāṇavārtika*, he has saluted the Buddha as being pure consciousness transcending all categories of thought, from whom the rays of consciousness radiate in all directions; being pure existence, the embodiment of compassion;

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ajñānam. tasmin prahīṇe sarvākāre jñeye'saktam apratihatam ca jñānam pravartata ity ataḥ sarvajñatvam adhigamyate. *Triṁśikāvijñaptibhāṣyam*, p. 27.

[21] kleśāvaraṇaprahāṇāt śrāvakāṇām vimuktikāyaḥ. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[22] śrāvakabodhisattvayoḥ. ādyasya kleśabījam, itarasya dvayāvaraṇabījam. tadudghātāt sarvajñatāvāptirbhavatīti. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

being full of bliss in every respect.[23] However, he does not dialectically establish, as have his followers, the omniscience of the Buddha, because according to him it is impossible to examine and prove the omniscience of anyone.[24] There is no valid means of cognition by which we can establish whether or not a particular person is with or without vices.[25] This does not mean that Dharmakīrti has rejected the possibility of omniscience. Undoubtedly he accepts the possibility of an omniscient person, but he rejects the possibility of verifying this omniscience by any empirical method. In the beginning of his commentary named Svopajñavṛti on his own book Pramāṇavārtika-svārthānumāna, he has accepted the omniscience of the Buddha and has saluted him with all religious fervour, addressing him as omniscient (oṃ namaḥ sarvajñāya). He further admits that a yogi who has mystical knowledge apprehends everything very clearly, because his knowledge is produced by the force of contemplation and is free from all categories of thought.[26] Also

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[23] vidhūtakalpanājāla gambhīrodāramūrtaye.
namaḥ samantabhadrāya samantasphuraṇatviṣe.
Ibid., 1, 1.

[24] puruṣātiśayāpekṣam yathārthamapare viduḥ.
iṣṭo'yamarthaḥ śakyeta jñātuṃ sotiśaya yadi.
Ibid., Svārthānumāna, Verse 219.

[25] Ibid., Verse 220.

[26] prāg uktam yoginām jñānaṃ teṣāṃ tad bhāvanāmayaṃ;
vidhūta kalpanājālam spaṣṭam ev āvabhāsate.
Pramāṇavārtika-Pratyakṣa Paricchedа, Verse 281.

in his Nyāyabindu, Dharmakīrti holds that a yogi can attain a direct apprehension of all things.[27]

Although Dharmakīrti does not bother to prove the omniscience of the Buddha dialectically, he accepts him as the knower of ultimate reality (jñānavān). On this basis he asserts that the Buddha should be accepted as the authority for Dharma like a valid knowledge. Dharmakīrti holds that valid knowledge has two characteristics: first, it should lead to fruitful activity[28] and second, it should reveal something which was not known before.[29] The Buddha has both these characteristics of valid knowledge. First, he has taught true Dharma which leads to the final emancipation, if it is properly followed. Second, since it was not known to anybody else before, he was the first person to perceive Dharma and reveal it to mankind. Again, he has taught momentariness so as to remove the concept of permanent entity such as self or God. He has taught what exists to remove what does not exist. Not only this, but he has taught the means of obtaining the realization of ultimate reality. For this reason, the Buddha should be accepted as the authority for Dharma since his teachings lead to fruitful activity and reveal the unknown.[30]

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[27] bhūtārthabhāvanāprakarsa-paryantajaṃ yogijñānaṃ ceti. Nyāyabinduḥ, Prathamaparicchedaḥ, p. 14.

[28] pramāṇam avisamvādi jñānam... Pramāṇavārtika, 1, 3.

[29] ajñātartha prakāśo vā... Ibid., 1, 7.

[30] tadvat pramāṇam bhagavān abhūta vinivṛttaye;
bhūtoktiḥ sādhan āpekṣā tato yuktā pramāṇatā.
Ibid., 1, 9.

Dharmakīrti has given seven arguments to prove that the Buddha is reliable as a religious teacher in order to prove the infallibility of his revealed Dharma.

First, the Buddha should be accepted as the authority for Dharma because he is the knower of truth.[31] Only that person should be accepted as the authority for Dharma who knows the transcendental reality. Only one who has become enlightened can know the ultimate reality of the universe. Consequently, he is the knower of Dharma as a means of liberation. Liberation is the highest aim of life, but one cannot attain it unless one follows its method, that is the Dharma taught by a person who has directly realized it. In other words, the perfect method leading to liberation should be taught by a person who, because of his enlightenment, is the knower of the ultimate truth. That is to say, only an enlightened person should reveal the Dharma because he is the knower of the ultimate truth. An unenlightened person, being under the influence of ignorance, cannot reveal Dharma as a means of liberation. There is always a fear that he may misguide, due to his ignorance.[32]

Second, Dharmakīrti establishes in his book the Pramāṇavārtika that the Buddha should be accepted as the authority for Dharma because

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[31] jñānattvāt bhagavān pramāṇam. Pramāṇavātika, p. 50.

[32] prāmāṇyaṃ ca parokṣārtha-jñānaṃ tat sādhanasya ca;
abhāvān nāsty anuṣṭhānaṃ iti kecit pracakṣate.
jñānavān mṛgyate kaścit tadukta-pratipattaye;
ajñopadeśakaraṇe vipralambhana-śaṅkābhiḥ.
Ibid., 1, 30-31.

he knows what should be accepted as good and what should be rejected as bad.[33] He affirms that a person can acquire the knowledge of super-sensuous realities through his self-effort and spiritual discipline. Such a person can become the knower of Dharma, which is essential for mankind. The importance of his knowledge is that he should know perfectly all those things which are useful for the spiritual attainments (purusārtha) of mankind. In other words, the religious teacher should know all those things which are necessary for liberation. We should enquire for only that knowledge which can be practised for the highest good. It is not very important and useful that a religious teacher should know all the minute details of the universe or that he should know all the number of insects of the world through his wide range of knowledge.[34] Dharmakīrti accepts the Buddha as the authority for Dharma, not because he is omniscient and knows each and every thing of the universe, but because he knows what should be sought and what should be rejected. It is not essential for our lives that we should know each and every thing of the world, but it is absolutely essential to know what is good for us and what is bad for us.[35] This type of knowledge

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[33] heyopādeya vedakatvāt bhagavān pramāṇam. Pramāṇavārtika, p. 51.

[34] tasmād anuṣṭheyagatam jñānam asya vicāryatām;
kītasaṅkhyā parijñānaṁ tasyā naḥ kvopayujyate.
Ibid., Verse 1, 32.

[35] heyopādeya tattvasya hānyupāyasya vedakaḥ;
yaḥ pramāṇam asāviṣṭo na tu sarvasya vedakaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 1, 33.

is essential for our worldly as well as spiritual attainment and highest good. Among the four noble truths, the first two, that is, "there is suffering" and "there is a cause of suffering", refer to truths that are not desirable. Consequently, the suffering and its cause should be rejected. The last two truths, that is, "there is cessation of suffering" and "there is a way leading to the cessation of suffering", are good and should be accepted and sought after. The world is full of suffering. In order to understand the suffering, we should know the cause of suffering. Without knowing the cause of suffering, suffering cannot be removed. When there is no cause, the effect cannot remain. Therefore the knowledge of the first two noble truths is essential. In the same way, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering and the way leading to the cessation of suffering is essential. Unless we know the way of cessation of suffering we cannot achieve the cessation of suffering. Consequently, a person who knows the things worth accepting or worth rejecting should be accepted as an authority for Dharma.

It is not essential that a person should be accepted as authority for Dharma who knows all things of the world. It is also not essential that he should perceive the things which are remote. If perceiving of things which are remote is the criterion for knowing Dharma, in that case we should accept an eagle as authority for Dharma because its visual perception is greater than that of human beings.[36] The most

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[36] dūraṃ paśyatu vā mā vā tattvam iṣṭam tu paśyatu;
pramāṇam dūradarśī cedeta gṛdhrān upāsmahe.
Ibid., Verse 1, 34.

desired authority for Dharma is one who knows all those things which are desired. If he knows only those things which are desired in this life, our aim is fulfilled. Thus, Dharmakīrti holds that that person should be accepted as authority for Dharma who has a clear-cut knowledge of acceptable and non-acceptable things. He is not concerned with establishing the existence of a person who knows everything of the world.

Third, the Buddha is the authority for Dharma due to his great compassion.[37] Here compassion means the desire to remove the suffering and the cause of suffering of the whole world. The Buddha practised this kind of compassion in the stages of Bodhisattva.[38] When Buddha saw the suffering of the people, compassion arose in him. He wondered how to remove the suffering of the world. He practised this compassion constantly through his different lives. Consequently, this compassion became embodied in him. He desired to teach the way leading to the cessation of suffering. In order to do so, he intuitively realized the four noble truths. After this realization he taught these truths for the people of the world. Thus, due to compassion the Buddha realized the four noble truths and taught them for the welfare of mankind.[39]

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[37] kāruṇikatvād bhagavān pramāṇaṃ. Ibid., p. 52.

[38] sādhanaṃ karuṇ-ābhyāsāt sā buddher-dehasaṅśrayāt;
asiddhobhyāsa iti cenn-āsraya pratiṣedhataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 1, 35.

[39] tathā hi mūlam-abhyāsaḥ pūrvaḥ pūrvaḥ parasya tu;
kṛpā-vairāgya-bodhādeś cittadharmasyȧ pātave.
kṛpātmakatvam-abhyāsād ghṛṇāvairāgyarāgavat;
niṣpanna-karuṇotkarṣaḥ parȧ-duhkhākṣameritaḥ,
daẏāvān duhkha-hānārtham-upāyeṣv-abhiyujyate;
parokṣ-opeya taddhetos tadākhyānaṃ hi duṣkaraṃ.
Ibid., Verses 1, 131-33.

Therefore, he should be accepted as the authority for Dharma because he has no self-interest in teaching it.

Fourth, the Buddha is the authority for Dharma because he is a Śāstā.[40] He has taught the four noble truths. The meaning of the word Śāstā is one who rules or controls. Buddha is called Śāstā not because he is ruling people like a king but because he is ruling the hearts of people by his teachings. A compassionate person tries to remove the suffering of others and he tries to find the means of removing this suffering. If a compassionate person does not know the method of removing suffering, he cannot teach it. The scripture and reason combined are sufficient to examine the teachings of a person. The teaching of the means of removing suffering is called Śāsana. Buddha has taught these truths, so he is called Śāstā. Consequently, he is accepted as the authority on Dharma.[41]

Fifth, Dharmakīrti accepted the Buddha as the authority for Dharma because he is Sugata.[42] Here Sugata means one who has removed the cause of suffering. The Buddha has completely removed the cause of suffering. Therefore, he is called Sugata. The literal translation of the word Sugata is one who has gone away in a perfect manner. Here the prefix Su has three meanings: well or very well, once for all, and completely. The Buddha is very well gone because no suffering is residing in him and he does not believe in the existence of a permanent

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[40] śāstṛtvād bhagavān pramāṇam. Ibid., p. 108.

[41] Ibid.

[42] sugatatvāt bhagavān pramāṇam. Ibid., p. 116.

soul. A person who believes in the existence of a permanent soul falls in love with the soul. Consequently, he rotates in the circle of birth and death because he wants to get rid of suffering and obtain pleasure. A person who does not believe in the concept of a permanent soul does not fall into the circle of birth and death. Buddha is also well gone because he proceeds toward the way which he has realized and he also uses his reason for that. He does not believe in the concept of a permanent soul, which is the cause of birth and death. Therefore, he will not come again in the circle of birth and death. Once he has removed the suffering, he cannot fall in the grip of suffering again. He is Sugata because he has become perfect in the teaching of the four noble truths due to his removal of all suffering. By practice of yoga he has removed the hindrances to speech and intellect. Due to these three qualities of Sugata, the Buddha is accepted as the authority for Dharma.[43]

The sixth argument given by Dharmakīrti in support of the Buddha's authority for Dharma is his Tāyitva.[44] Tāya means to teach the way which has been perceived or realized by oneself. Due to this

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[43] niṣpatteḥ prathamaṃ bhāvāt hetur-uktam-idaṃ dvayam;
hetoḥ prahāṇam triguṇaṃ sugatatvaṃ aniḥ śrayād.
duḥ khasya śastam nairātmya dṛṣṭeś tadyuktito pi vā;
punarāvṛttir ityuktau janmadoṣa-samudbhavau.
ātma-darśana-bījasya hānād-apunarāgamaḥ;
tadbhūta bhinnātmatayā'śeṣam akleśanirjaram.
kāya-vāg-buddhi-vaiguṇyaṃ mārgokty-apatutāpi vā;
aśesahānam-abhyāsād uktyāder-doṣa-saṃkṣayah.
Ibid., Verses 1, 140-43.

[44] tāyitvād bhagavān pramāṇam. Ibid., p. 118.

type of teaching, the Buddha takes the people of the world beyond the ocean of suffering. Thus he is called Tāyi. We cannot doubt his teachings of Dharma because he cannot tell a lie. Lies are told only by those who are interested in their own pleasure or who are ignorant. The Buddha has realized the ultimate reality and has destroyed the concept of a permanent soul. Consequently, neither is he ignorant nor has he a desire for self-pleasure and happiness. Moreover, the Buddha was compassionate. That is why whatever spiritual discipline he practised in order to realize the four noble truths was only for the sake of others and not for himself. Due to these things, there is not even the least suspicion that he has spoken any lie in his teachings. He is Tāyi because he has taught the way realized by him and his teachings are free from any error or lie, that is, they are truthful.

The Buddhists give another meaning of the word Tāya, that is, the revelation of the four noble truths. The Buddha has revealed these four noble truths to mankind. He is the first person in the world to realize these truths and to teach them to people. Thus Buddha is Tāyi in both the aforementioned ways. Due to this, he is the authority for Dharma.[45]

Seventh, Dharmakīrti accepts the Buddha as authority for Dharma because whatever he has taught is found to be correct upon due examina-

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[45]hetusvabhāva jñānena taj-jñānaṃ api sādhyate;
tāyaḥ svadṛṣṭa mārg goktir vaiphalyād vakti nānṛtam,
dayālutvāt parārthaṃ ca sarv-ārambh-ābhiyogataḥ;
tataḥ pramāṇam tāyo vā catuḥ sattya prakāśanam.
Ibid., Verses 1, 146-47.

tion.[46] Dinnāga, in his book Pramāṇasamuccaya, has eulogized the Buddha and accepted the Buddha as authority because his teachings are self-consistent and can be proved by valid means of cognition. The knowledge which leads to fruitful activity and is not contradicted at any time is considered to be authority. Whatever Buddha has taught is true forever. There is no contradiction in his teaching. Neither has he taught anything which is incorrect. The ultimate reality is the same as has been taught by the Buddha. There is consistency between his teachings and the nature of reality.[47] That is why his teachings of Dharma are consistent and he is thus the authority for Dharma. Thus Dharmakīrti, setting aside the question of omniscience, demonstrates that the Buddha is the only knower of Dharma.

In his book Pramāṇavārtikālankaraḥ, Prajnākaragupta goes a step further than Dharmakīrti and accepts the Buddha both as the knower of Dharma and also an omniscient person. He also accepts that any yogi can obtain omniscience like the Buddha: through removal of attachments and hindrances, it is possible for the yogi in his consciousness to know everything. A person becomes Vītarāga by the removal of attachment. Following the same line of spiritual discipline (yoga) a Vītarāga, by a little more effort, will sooner or later become omniscient.[48] As

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[46] samvādakatvāt bhagavān pramāṇam. Ibid., p. 165.

[47] tataḥ parārtha tantratvaṃ siddhārthasy-āvirāmataḥ;
dayayā śreya ācaṣṭe jñānādbhūtam sasādhanaṃ.
tacc-ābhiyogavān vaktuṃ yatas-tasmāt pramāṇatā;
upadeśa tathābhāva stutis tadupadeśataḥ.
Ibid., Verses 1, 283-84.

[48] tato'sya vītarāgatve sarvārtha jñānasambhavah;
samāhitasya sakalam cakāst iti viniścitam.

we shall see in the following chapters, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla follow the same line as Prajñākaragupta to establish the omniscience of the Buddha.

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sarveṣāṃ vītarāgāṇāṃ etat kasmān na vidyate;
rāgādi kṣayamātre hi tairyatnasya pravartanāt.
punaḥ kālāntare teṣāṃ sarvajñaguṇarāgiṇām;
alpayatnena sarvajñasya siddhir avāritā.'
Pramāṇavārtikālaṅkāra, p. 329.

CHAPTER IV

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN OMNISCIENCE

The school of Mīmāṁsā maintains that only the Vedas are omniscient authority for Dharma. No human being can be omniscient because of the mind's inherent limitation. Only the Vedas are omniscient, because they are a work in a spacio-temporal dimension -- they are not written by man, for they are eternal. The Vedas are the only basis upon which man can know the supersensuous truths, because they are omniscient (sarvajña). Therefore the Vedas are the only authority upon which Dharma (religious truths) can correctly be based (codanālakṣaṇoartho dharmaḥ). The knowledge of the supersensuous reality like Dharma is possible only through the Vedas. Only the Vedas can give us the knowledge of past, present and the future, and subtle, hidden and transcendental substance.[1]

It should be noted that this school is the most orthodox and firm supporter of the Vedas. It denies, through various arguments, the existence of a creator of the universe as well as the possibility of human omniscience. According to this school, an omniscient person is

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[1] codanā hi bhūtam bhavantam bhaviṣyantaṃ sūkṣmaṃ vyavahitaṃ viprakṛṣṭamityevam jātīyakaṃ artham avagamayitum alaṃ. Śābara Bhāṣya, 1.1.2.

non-existent, like a sky-lotus, because he is not apprehended by any of the valid means of cognition. All objects cannot be known by anyone. Here the term "all" (sarva) does not mean objects other than Dharma and Adharma (anti-religion), such as oil, water, butter, and so on.[2]

Mīmāṁsakas are prepared to accept a person as omniscient if he knows everything, but they are not prepared to accept him as Dharmajña (knower of Dharma). A person can know everything, but he cannot be called Dharmajña (knower of religious truths). Only the Vedas can reveal the Dharma, because they are the knower of the past, present and future (trikāladarśī). They have rejected the existence of an omniscient being. Their main attempt is not to reject the concept of omniscience but to deny the existence of a knower of Dharma. They believe that the knowledge of Dharma and Adharma is possible only through the Vedas (dharmachodanaiva pramāṇam). They have no hesitation in accepting a person who knows everything of the universe, but they are not ready to accept any being who knows Dharma and Adharma.[3]

In order to maintain the omniscience of the Vedas which are the only authority for Dharma, the Mīmāṁsakas have raised many objections against the existence of an omniscient person. First, they deny the

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[2]athāpi prakṛtaṁ kiñcittailodakaghṛtādivat;
tena sarveṇa sarvajñas tathāpyastu na vāryate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3131.

[3]dharmajñatva niṣedhaścet kevalo'tropayujyate;
sarvam anyad vijānanah puruṣah kena vāryate.
Ibid., Verse 3128.

possibility of human omniscience by logical arguments. Second, they argue that the existence of an omniscient person cannot be proven by any of the valid means of cognition.

This school has established that the Vedas should be taken as the supreme authority regarding Dharma, heaven (svarga), liberation (mokṣa) and other supersensuous truths. Kumārila asserts that it is always doubtful whether the words uttered by a person are valid or not. Therefore, only the Vedas can be omniscient, because they are impersonal.[4] It is natural that this school would deny the existence of an omniscient person. Even those schools which believe in the existence of an omniscient person have criticized each other on the concept of human omniscience. The Buddhists say that Vardhamana, the Jaina teacher, should not be regarded as an omniscient teacher, because his teachings of Syādvāda and other doctrines are false. On the other hand, the Jainas say that the Buddha should not be regarded as an omniscient teacher, because his teachings regarding the doctrine of momentariness (kṣaṇikavāda), etc., are incorrect. Both the Jainas and the Buddhists have put forth reasons and counter-reasons, but no definite criterion has been established to verify the omniscience of a person. On this basis, the Mīmāṁsakas conclude that the existence of such a person who knows everything of the universe cannot be proved by any valid means of cognition.

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[4] doṣāḥ santi na santīti puṁvācyeṣu hi śaṁkyate;
śrutau kartur abhāvān na doṣaśaṅkaiva nāsti naḥ.
Ibid., Verse 2087; cf. Śloka Vārttikā, p. 74 (Chou. ed.), cited in The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, op. cit., p. 281.

There are two possible interpretations of human omniscience. First, a person may superficially know the universe as a whole. Second, he may know the whole of the universe in full detail.

However, it is futile to accept the first possibility. The objects of the world are either existent (bhāva-rūpa) or non-existent (abhāva-rūpa). A man could not be called omniscient by knowing only an epitome of the world.[5] Again, a person may not be called omniscient on the basis of this knowledge that all objects of the world are knowable (jñeya) and cognisable (prameya).[6] Some philosophers have reached the conclusion that the world is divided into certain limited categories. The Buddhists have postulated the "Five Groups" (pañcaskandha), the Vaiśeṣika have postulated "Six Categories" (ṣaṭpadārthaḥ). The Naiyāyikas have accepted "Sixteen Categories", and the Sāṅkhya have accepted "Twenty-five Principles" (tattvas). But it is absurd to conceive of them as omniscient, because those who read their philosophical doctrines would also become omniscient.[7] It is also impossible to regard a person as omniscient if he cognises six kinds of objects through

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[5] bhāvābhāvasvarūpam vā jagatsar vaṁ yadocyate;
tatsaṅkṣepena sarvajñah puruṣaḥ ken neṣyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3132.

[6] evaṁ jñeyaprameyatvasamkṣepenāpi sarvatām;
āśritya yadi sarvajñah.kastaṁ varayitum kṣamah.
Ibid., Verse 3133.

[7] padārthā yaiśca yāvantah sarvatvenāvadhāritāḥ;
tajjñatvenāpi sarvajñāḥ sarve tadgranthavedinaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3134.

the six valid means of cognition (pramāṇa). Consequently, that a person is omniscient cannot be proven on the basis that he knows a little about the universe as a whole.[8]

As far as the second alternative is concerned, a person cannot know in full detail all the atoms contained even in a single body. How then is one to know all the little details that constitute the whole universe? It is impossible to have the knowledge of the entire universe even in a hundred years. At the same time, this knowledge is as futile as examining the teeth of a crow, because it has no bearing upon Dharma and Adharma and it will not fulfill any purpose of mankind.[9]

Human omniscience cannot be established by perception and other valid means of cognition, so Dharma and Adharma can be known only through the Vedas.[10] It is impossible to know them through the teachings of the Buddha and other religious teachers, because these teachings are not contained[11] either in the Vedas or in the Upveda (sub-revealed literature like Āyurveda, Dhanurveda and the like), nor in the

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[8] tathā sadbhiḥ pramāṇairyah satprameyavivekavān;
so'pi saṁkṣiptasarvajñaḥ kasya nāma na saṁmataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3135.

[9] ekaśyaiva śarīrasya yāvantah paramāṇavaḥ;
keśaromaṇi yāvanti kastāni jñātumarhati.
samastāvayavavyaktivistara jñānasādhanaṁ;
kākadanta-parīkṣāvat kriyamāṇam anarthakaṁ.
Ibid., Verses 3137-3138.

[10] sarvapramātṛsaṁbaddhapratyakṣādinivāraṇāt;
kevalāgamagamyatvaṁ lapsyate puṇyapāpayoḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3142.

[11] naca vedopavedāṅgapratyaṅgādyarthabodhanaṁ;
buddhader dṛśyate vākyam sa sarvajñaḥ katham mudhā.
Ibid., Verse 3146.

Aṅgas (subsidiary sciences) of the Vedas or in the Pratyaṅgas (auxiliaries) of the Vedas. Again, these teachers have not composed any scripture which provides the knowledge of all the objects. It is wrong to say that those objects which are not mentioned in their teachings might have been known to them. In that case, all the poets should be regarded as omniscient due to the composition of their poems.[12]

There are many teachers, such as the Buddha, Kapila, Kaṇāda, Gautama, Vardhamāna and others, who are regarded as omniscient by their respective followers. But it is not proper to regard them all as omniscient, because they have taught mutually contradictory doctrines regarding supersensuous objects. If the Buddha is omniscient, then what is the proof that Kapila is not also? If both are omniscient then there should not be any difference of opinion between them.[13]

Again, the Buddhists are not right in saying that that person alone can be regarded as omniscient whose teachings cannot be contradicted by any valid means of cognition. The Buddhists assert that the Buddha should be regarded as omniscient in the sense that he directly knows the true nature of all things. His omniscience is derived from his unique teachings, teachings which are in accord with reality. In

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[12] svagranthesvanibaddho'pi svajñāto'rtho yadīṣyate;
sarvajñāḥ kavayaḥ sarve syuḥ svakāvyanibandhanāt.
Ibid., Verse 3147.

[13] sarvajñeṣu ca bhūyassu viruddharthopdeśiṣu;
tulyahetuṣu sarveṣu ko namaiko'vadhāryatām.
sugato yadi sarvajñaḥ kapilo neti kā pramā;
athobhāvapi sarvajñau matabhedastayoḥ katham.
Ibid., Verses 3148-3149.

other words, the Buddha is omniscient according to the Buddhists because his teachings are not heard or inferred from any external source and because they describe the true nature of things. The same reasoning is used by the Digambara Jainas to prove the omniscience of Vardhamāna.[14] Here again, the matter is doubtful because both the Buddhists and Jainas have criticised each other on the conception of omniscience. On this ground, the Mīmāṁsakas have refuted their doctrines very successfully.[15]

The Mīmāṁsakas assert that no being can perceive supersensuous truths, they can be observed only through the Vedas.[16] It is not correct to say that the Buddhists know supersensuous truths through the words uttered by other Buddhas such as Kanāka, Kāśyapa and Dīpaṅkara and not through the Vedas, because the reliability of their teachings also can be ascertained no more than that of the Buddha.[17]

The Buddhists are also not correct in saying that the line of the Buddhas is beginningless. Therefore, the teachings propounded by the Buddha should be regarded as defectless and without beginning just like the Vedic tradition. The Mīmāṁsakas declare that the teachings

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[14] Pañjikā, 3153, p. 823.

[15] evaṁ sarvajña-kalpeṣu nihateṣu parasparaṁ;
alpaśeṣīkṛtān sarvān vedavādī haniṣyati.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3154.

[16] tasmādatīndriyārthānāṁ sākṣāddraṣṭā na vidyate;
vacanena tu nityena yaḥ paśyati sa paśyate.
Ibid., Verse 3175.

[17] Ibid., Verses 3176-3177.

of the Buddha are not reliable because he has no direct knowledge of Dharma.[18] The mere fact that the teachings of the Buddha are beginningless, as the Buddhists hold, also does not prove that they are reliable. Neither reliability nor unreliability is necessarily connected with the beginninglessness. For instance, real gold has been in use since the beginning of time, just like unreal god, but both are not equally real.[19]

It is also wrong to say that both the Buddha and the Vedas are equal sources of right knowledge, because both are omniscient. The Mīmāṡakas do not believe in the existence of an omniscient person, because such a person cannot be proven by any valid means of cognition except non-apprehension (abhāva). Therefore the omniscient person who falls within the scope of non-apprehension cannot be placed at the same level as the Vedas.[20]

Also, the existence of an omniscient person cannot be proved on the basis of the proclamation of the Buddha himself, such as "I am omniscient, perceiving all things, there is nothing that is unknown to the Tathāgata",[21] because there is interdependence in this assertion.[22]

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[18] na śauddhodanivākyānāṁ pāratantryātpramāṇatā;
apaśyataḥ svayaṁ dharmaṁ tathā śauddhodaner api.
Ibid., Verse 3179.

[19] Ibid., Verses 3183-3184.

[20] Pañjikā, 3185, p. 830.

[21] sarvajño'haṁ sarvadarśī nāsti tathāgatasya
kiñcidajñātam ityādi.
Ibid., 3187, p. 831.

[22] Tattavasaṅgraha, Verse 3188.

This statement cannot be accepted as reliable unless it is proved that it was spoken by an omniscient person. How can he be accepted as omniscient on the basis of his own declaration?[23]

Again, the Buddha cannot be accepted as omniscient on the basis of the assertion of the Śrāvakas such as Śāriputra and others, who declare the Buddha, the worthy scion of the Śākya family, as omniscient.[24] This type of statement made by a non-omniscient person cannot establish the omniscience of the Buddha. If a person accepts this statement as authority, why does he not hold his own words as authority?[25]

The Buddhists hold that there has been a series of innumerable Buddhas in the past and this series is going to continue in the future also. The knowledge of the omniscience of the Buddha is derived from the words of these Buddhas.[26] In other words, the omniscience of the Buddha is affirmed by the assertion of another omniscient person, that is, another Buddha. On this basis, the Buddhists establish the omniscience of the Buddha. The Mīmāṁsakas, however, do not accept this view as very convincing. If a single one of the Buddhas happens to be non-omniscient, then the omniscience of the Buddha cannot be established through the words of the Buddha.[27]

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[23] sarvajñoktatayā vākyaṁ satyaṁ tena tadastitā;
kathaṁ tadubhyaṁ siddhyat siddhan mūlāntarād ṛte.
Ibid., Verse 3189.

[24] "Sarvajño'yam śākyakulanandana iti".
Pañjikā, 3190, p. 832.

[25] Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3190.

[26] Pañjikā, 3191, p. 832.

[27] Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3191.

The Mīmāṁsakas further argue that the people of the present time are not able to know an omniscient person because no such person is present before them. Even a man contemporaneous with the omniscient person cannot know him as omniscient unless he himself becomes omniscient; for such a man who is not omniscient, the teachings of the so-called omniscient person would be non-reliable and doubtful. In fact, the reliability of his words would not be more than the words of any other person.[28]

It is also not proper to call a person omniscient who can know all things that are known to his disciple, because it is not possible for him to know all the knowable objects of other different worlds. It is impossible to believe that all men approach the Buddha simultaneously and he answers all their questions, because all men of the past, present and future from all over the world cannot be brought together.[29]

The omniscient person must know the things of the past and the future also. Otherwise, he would be only a partial knower. However, it is impossible to know the things of the future. Nobody can know future things by sense perception, because what is still in the future, that is, non-existent, cannot be an object for knowledge because a future thing is not a real object. Inference and other valid means of cognition also cannot prove the apprehension of future things, because there

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[28]Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3192.

[29]sarvaśiṣyair api jnātān arthān saṁvadayannapi;
na sarvajño bhaved anyalokajñātārthavarjanāt.
na ca sarvanarajñātajñeyasaṁvādasaṁbhavaḥ;
kālatrayatrilokasthair narair na ca samāgamaḥ.
Ibid., Verses 3194–3195.

are no inferential marks (liṅgābhāvād),[30] and other necessary factors. Just like future things, there will be no apprehension of past things also because sense perception or any other valid means of cognition cannot be applied here, as that also is a non-entity.[31]

In addition, the description of the omniscience of Brahmā and other Hindu deities is found in the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa of Brahmānic (Hindu) literature. The Mīmāṁsakas take these descriptions as commendatory declaration (arthavāda)[32] Or it can be said that their knowledge is certain regarding the objects spoken of in the Itihāsa and Purāṇa. Their knowledge is certain because they know Dharma in their own selves through meditation.[33] According to this literature, knowledge is one of the ten imperishable qualities of Lord Śaṅkara, but he is not called omniscient. His knowledge consists only in the direct perception of his pure self.[34]

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[30] anāgatena dṛṣṭam ca pratyakṣasya manāgapi;
sāmarthyaṁ nānumānadijaṅma liṅgādibhir vinā.
Ibid., Verse 3174.

[31] Pañjikā, 3174, p. 828.

[32] itihāsapurāṇeṣu brahmādir yo'pi sarvavit;
jñānam apratigham yasya vairāgyaṁ ceti kīrtitaṁ.
gauṇatvenaiva vaktavyaḥ so'pi mantrārthavādavat;
yadvāl prakṛtadharmādi jñānā(prati)ghatocyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3199-3200.

[33] Ibid., Verses 3201-3205.

[34] jñānaṁ vairāgyam aiśvaryam iti yo'pi daśāvyayaḥ;
śaṅkaraḥ śrūyate so'pi jñānavān ātmavittayā.
Ibid., Verse 3206.

Apart from this, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara are the embodiments of the Vedas and the Vedas consist of the knowledge of all things. These gods are omniscient in this sense. But the knowledge of the Buddha is dependent upon himself.[35] Furthermore, they are deities, superior to all human beings, so they can acquire the pure knowledge through meditation. They are mentioned in the Vedas, because they are equipped with eternal qualities and eternal function.[36] It is better to accept the fact that Dharma is taught by the Vedas than to hold that the omniscient person is mentioned in the Vedas.[37]

According to the Mīmāṁsakas, the clear and direct knowledge of Dharma is obtained from the Vedas because it provides a clear knowledge of everything. On the other hand, the omniscient person provides indirect and indistinct knowledge of Dharma,[38] because he has retired into Nirvāṇa (liberation) and therefore cannot be clearly perceived. If it is accepted that he has not entered Nirvāṇa and is clearly perceptible, even then he would not impart any teaching, because after reaching that

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[35] athāpī vedadehatvād brahmaviṣṇumaheśvarāh;
sarvajñānamayād vedāt sarvajñā mānuṣasya kim.
kvaca buddhādayo martyāh kvaca devottamatrayaṁ;
yena tatsparddhayā te'pi sarvajñā iti mohadṛk.
Ibid., Verses 3208-3209.

[36] Ibid., Verses 3210-3211.

[37] anityasya tu buddhāder na nityāgamagamyatā;
nītyatve cāgamasyeṣṭe vṛthā sarvajñākalpanā.
Ibid., Verse 3212.

[38] Ibid., Verses 3213-3214.

state he has no desire for anything. Even if he imparts some teaching at this stage, it could not be heard by all men of the past, present and future.[39]

Thus the Mīmāṁsakas conclude that a person like the Buddha or Vardhamāna should not be regarded as the knower of Dharma on the basis of the knowledge of a few supersensuous realities unless he is proved to be omniscient. Even if the omniscience of the Buddha is accepted, says Kumārila, his teachings cannot be accepted as authority for Dharma. Omniscience and speaking cannot co-exist, because they are contrary to each other. The presence of omniscience implies the absence of speaking and vice versa. The Buddha cannot speak while he is rapt in meditation in the tenth stage (bhūmi). At this stage, his mind would be completely concentrated. Consequently, he would not be able to propound any teaching of Dharma.[40]

Valid Means of Cognition (Pramāṇa)

The Mīmāṁsakas hold that the existence of an omniscient person cannot be supported by any valid means of cognition. Perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), analogy (upamāna), presumption on

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[39] tirohiṭastu vedabodhitasarvajñajñāto dharmas tasya nirvāṇaṁgatasyāprakaṭatvāt. Anirvāṇāvasthāyāṁ apy anicchāya tadupadeśābhāvāt. upadeśe'pi sarvatra sarvadā sarveṣāṁ śravaṇābhāvāt. Pañjikā, 3214, p. 838.

[40] śuddha sphaṭika tulyena sarvaṁ jñānena buddhyate.
dhyānāpannaśca sarvārtha viṣayāṁ dhāraṇāṁ dadhat.
tathā vyāptaśca sarvārthaiḥ śaktau naivopadeśane.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3238-3239.

necessary implication (arthāpatti), words (śabda) and non-apprehension (abhāva), all these valid means of cognition cannot prove the existence of an all-knowing person.

1. Perception (pratyakṣa)

A man is called omniscient because he knows all things. This knowledge of all things could be attained either through sense perception (indriyajñāna) or through mental perception (manojñāna).[41] Sense perception is limited in scope. Consequently, the apprehension of all things through perception is impossible. Otherwise, all the different things, such as taste, odour and so on, would be apprehended through a single cognition at one and the same time, which is not possible; there would be no apprehension of many things such as the mental thinking of other men and those things which are far away or very small or hidden.[42] All characteristics, otherwise, could be attributed to all things. The apprehension of all things through mental perception is also not possible. Mental perception has no independent operation of its own. It is supported by the fact that the deaf or blind persons also are found in the

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[41] sarvapadārthajñānāt sarvajña iśyate, tacca sakalavastuparijñānaṁ kadācid indriyajñānena va bhavet, manojñānena vā. Pañjikā, 3157, p. 824.

[42] mā bhūd ekena jñānena yugapadaśeṣārthasya grahaṇaṁ, anekena bhaviṣyatīti. yato yugapad anekavijñānasaṁbhavāt. saṁbhave 'pi na sarvapadārthagrahaṇam asti, paracittasyendriyajñānaviṣayatvāt, agocaraprāptasya ca durasūkṣmavyavahitāder arthasya tena gṛhītum aśakyatvāt. Pañjikā, 3158, p. 824.

the world. Therefore, it follows from this that mental perception envisages only those things which are apprehended by sense perception.[43]

It is inconsistent to say that a person can become omniscient by improving his power of intelligence (prajñā) through the practice of yoga and meditation. The power of intellect cannot reach the highest stage of perfection through any kind of yogic practice. Sense perception cannot transcend its inherent limitation, and the mental cognition cannot surpass the range of knowledge by repeated experiences. The intellect may become superior, but it cannot reach perfection. By practice, a man can jump to fifteen feet high in the sky but he cannot jump to the height of eight miles.[44] All cannot know all. The knowledge of all objects cannot rest in one man. No one can become omniscient.[45]

Again, the omniscient person cannot be the object of mental perception. In mental perception a man can only apprehend those ideas which occur in his own mind. He cannot comprehend the thought processes which are going on in the minds of other people. Also, the omniscient person cannot be proved to exist by mystic cognition (yogijñāna), because it is doubtful whether he is apprehended in such perception or not. Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty that an

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[43] Pañjikā, 3159, p. 825.

[44] daśahastāntaraṁ vyomno yo nāmotplutya gacchati;
na yojanānm asau gantuṁ, śakto'bhyāsaśatair api.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3168.

[45] sarvaḥ sarvaṁ na jānātī sarvajño nopapadyate;
naikatra pariniṣṭhā 'sti jñānasya puruṣe kvactt.
Ibid., Verse 3173.

omniscient person is seen by a mystic (yogī).[46]

2. Inference (anumāna)

The omniscient person cannot be proved to exist by inference. The Buddhists regard inference as based upon three kinds of mark (linga): (1) non-apprehension (anupalabdhiḥ); (2) causal relation (kārvakāraṇabhāvaḥ); and (3) the nature of things (svabhāvaḥ).

He cannot be proved by non-apprehension because positive, not negative, reasoning is required to prove his existence. He cannot be proved by causal relation, because the casual relation is always based upon perception. The reason based upon the nature of things also cannot prove the existence of the omniscient person. His nature cannot be known, because he is not seen.[47]

There could be three kinds of fallacy in the reasoning for proving the existence of the omniscient person: (1) inadmissible (asiddha); (2) contradictory (viruddha); and (3) inconclusive (anaikāntika). Any reason may be adduced as a property belonging to a positive entity (bhāvadharma), or to a negative entity (abhāvadharma), or to both. These three are the only possible alternatives. The reason adduced as a property belonging to a positive entity is inadmissible, because that positive entity, that is, the omniscient person is still to be proved. The reason adduced as a property belonging to a negative

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[46] Pañjikā, 3186, p. 830.

[47] Ibid., 3186, pp. 830-31.

entity is contradictory. Such a reason would prove the non-existence of the entity, that is, the omniscient person. The reason cannot belong to both, because such a reason would be inconclusive. Thus, none of the three kinds of mark can prove the inference of the existence of the omniscient person. Nor is he seen by us at the present time.[48]

3. Analogy (upamāna)

The omniscient person cannot be proved to exist by analogy which is based on similarity (sādṛśya) and its adjuncts (upādhi). No person is seen at the present time who may be called similar to the omniscient person. Hence the existence of the omniscient person cannot be proved on the basis of analogy. On the contrary, it is deduced from the analogy that there is no existence of an omniscient person.[49]

4. Presumption (arthāpatti)

The omniscient person cannot be proved to exist through presumption. The teachings of the Buddha regarding Dharma and Adharma can be accepted as authority only when his omniscience is established. As a matter of fact, no relationship has been perceived between the omniscient person and the teachings of Dharma and Adharma. It can only be

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[48] sarvajño dṛśyate tāvannedānīm asmadādibhiḥ;
dṛṣṭo na caikadeśo 'sti liṅgaṁ vā yo 'numāpayet.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3186.

[49] sarvajñasadṛśaḥ kaścid adi dṛśyetasāmprati;
tadā gamyeta sarvajñasadbhāva upamābalāt.
Ibid., Verse 3215.

an instance of inference from a universal premise. According to the Mīmāṁsakas, the teaching of Dharma may be due to dream, delusion, wrong teaching or the Vedas themselves.[50] The Buddha is ignorant of the Vedas, which has been accepted by the Buddhists themselves. Therefore, it is deduced that the teachings of the Buddha and other wicked teachers might have proceeded from sheer delusion for deceiving people.[51] Because a man who is ignorant of the Vedas cannot base his teachings upon the Vedas. In fact, the Buddha has imparted his teachings only to the ignorant persons and to the Śudras. If his teachings regarding Dharma had been based upon the Vedas, then he would have imparted his teachings to the Vedic scholars and the learned Brāhmaṇas as Manu and the other Brāhmaṇics who were learned in the Vedas have done.[52] Manu and other teachers were learned in the Vedas and they were dependent on the Vedas so far as the teaching of Dharma was concerned. They were well known among the Brāhmaṇas and the Vedic scholars who accepted their teachings because their works have been based on their understanding of the Vedas.[53]

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[50] upadeśo hi buddhāder anyathā'py upapadyate;
svapnādidṛṣṭan vyāmohat vedād vā tathā śrutāt.
Ibid., Verse 3223.

upadeśo hi vyāmohādapi bhavati, asati vyāmohe vedādapi bhavatīti.
Śābara Bhāṣya, cited in Pañjikā, 3223, p. 839.

[51] ye hi tāvadavedajñās teṣāṁ vedādasaṁbhavaḥ;
upadesakṛto, yas tair vyāmohōlādeva kevalāt.
śiṣyavyāmohanārthaṁ va vyāmohād vā'tadāśryāt;
loke duṣtopadeṣṭṛṇām upadesaḥ pravarttate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3224-3225.

[52] Ibid., Verses 3226-3227; cf., Pañjikā, 3226-3227.

[53] ye tu manvādayaḥ siddhāḥ pradhānyena trayīvidāṁ;
trayīvidāśritagranthās te vedaprabhavoktayaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3228.

5. Words (śabda)

The knowledge which proceeds from words (śabda) is called verbal cognition (śabda pramāṇa). This Śabda Pramāṇa is based on two sources; first, that which is based on eternal words (nityaśabdajanitam), and the second, that which is based on the utterance of men (pauruṣeya-dhvanihetukam).[54] The human omniscience cannot be established by the means of Śabda Pramāṇa. There is no declaration in the Vedas regarding the existence of an omniscient person. At the same time, he cannot be proved by an artificial truth.[55] The Upaniṣadic declarations, such as "He who is truthful in words, truthful in volition, truthful in desires, should be sought and should be desired to be known",[56] are only commendatory declaration according to the Mīmāṁsakas. There can be reliability in the human assertion such as it has been quoted in the Buddhist scriptures: "The blessed Lord the Tathāgata, the Arhat, is truly Enlightened".[57] Thus human omniscience cannot be supported by Śabda Pramāṇa.

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[54] śabdād asannikṛṣṭe'rthe yajjāyate jñānaṁ tacchābadaṁ, tacca dvividhaṁ nityaśabdajanitaṁ pauruṣeyadhvanihetukaṁ ca. Pañjikā, 3187, p. 831.

[55] na cāgamavidhiḥ kaścinnityasarvajñabodhakaḥ;
kṛtrimeṇa ca satyena sa kathaṁ pratipādyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3187.

[56] "yaḥ satyavāk satyasankalpaḥ satyakāmaḥ so'nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ". From Upaniṣad, cited in Pañjikā, 3187, p. 831.

[57] "sarvajño 'haṁ sarvadarśī, nāsti tathāgatasya kiñcid ajñātam ityādi". Cited in Pañjikā, 3187, p. 831.

6. Non-apprehension (abhāva)

The existence of an omniscient person cannot be proved by any of the above mentioned five valid means of cognition. Therefore it is concluded that his existence can be affirmed only by non-apprehension (abhāva),[58] the sixth valid means of cognition. This pramāṇa, however, can only prove the non-existence of such an omniscient person as the Buddha.

Thus Kumārila, the expounder of the Mīmāṁsa school, establishes the fact that human omniscience cannot be proved by reason or any valid means of cognition.

Arguments of Sāmaṭa and Yajñaṭa

Sāmaṭa and Yajñaṭa hold that the concept of human omniscience is purely baseless. It is a wonder how people believe in an omniscient person.[59]

Does the omniscient person know all things simultaneously or in succession? Does he know them as possessing one nature or only very important aspects? Or, is he called omniscient because he has the power to know all things?[60] Just as fire is called the "all-devourer" (sarva

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[58] evaṁ pañcabhirapi pramāṇair na sarvajñah siddhyatīti pāriśeṣyād abhāvenaiva gamyata iti siddho 'bhāvapramāṇa--viṣayīkṛtavigrahatvād ity ayaṁ hetuḥ. Pañjikā, 3229, pp. 340-41.

[59] evaṁ sarvajñatā puṁsāṁ svātantryena nirāspadā;
idaṁ ca cintyate bhūyaḥ sarvadarśī nathaṁ mataḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3247.

[60] yugapat paripāṭyā vā sarvaṁ caikasvabhāvataḥ;
jānan yathāpradhānaṁ va saktyā veṣyeta sarvavit.
Ibid., Verse 3248.

bhugiti), although it is not devouring all things, either simultaneously or successively.[61]

If it is accepted that the omniscient person apprehends all things simultaneously, that is, at one and the same time, then there are two possible alternative views regarding his apprehension. First, does he apprehend all things by a single cognition? Or does he apprehend all things at once through several cognitions? The first alternative cannot be accepted because two contradictory situations cannot be cognized by a single cognition. The second alternative is not convincing either, because many divergent cognitions cannot appear at one and the same time.[62] In fact, there has never been an experience of several cognitions in one single consciousness.[63]

Just what does it mean to speak of cognizing all things by several cognitions in one moment? It is not possible to know, even in hundreds of years, all the innumerable things of the past, present and future.[64]

If it is accepted that the omniscient person apprehends only the "universal forms" (sāmānyarupa) of all things and he does not perceive

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[61]Pañjikā, 3248, p. 845.

[62]yugapacchucyaśucyādisvabhāvānāṁ virodhinām;
jñānam naikadhiyā dṛṣṭaṁ bhinnā vā gatayaḥ kvacit.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3249.

[63]Pañjikā, 3249, p. 845.

[64]bhūtaṁ bhavad bhaviṣyacca vastvanantaṁ krameṇa kaḥ;
pratyekaṁ śaknuyād boddhuṁ vatsarāṇāṁ śatairapi.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3250.

their "specific individualities" (svalakṣaṇāni),[65] then what is the use of such a person who knows only the "universal form" and not the "specific individuality"?

Again, the apprehension of the "universal form" by the said omniscient person may be either true or false. If it is true, then it means that all things are one, that is, free from duality. This oneness of all things is contrary to our normal experience.[66] In that case there would be no difference between the disciple, the omniscient person, Dharma, Adharma and the teachings of the omniscient person, because the "distinctive characteristic" (svabhāva) of these things cannot be cognized.[67]

The omniscient person would become a deluded person if his cognition of the oneness of all things is false. In that case, there would be no faith in his words which are as good as the words of an intoxicated person.[68]

The Buddhists hold that the omniscient person perceives all actions (karmas) and their causes through extraordinary cognition produced by communion (samādhi).[69] However, the validity of this statement

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[65] Ibid., Verse 3251.

[66] Ibid., Verse 3253.

[67] tataśca śiṣyasarvajñadharmādharmataduktayaḥ;
na syur vo bhinnarūpatve svabhāvānavadhāraṇāt.
Ibid., Verse 3254.

[68] Ibid., Verse 3255.

[69] sahetu saphalam karma jñānenālaukikena yaḥ;
samādhijena jānāti sa sarvajño'padiṣyate.
Ibid., Verse 3256.

cannot be proved. There is no valid means of cognition to establish the fact that an omniscient person perceives through extraordinary cognition. Neither perception nor inference nor scripture (_śabda_) proves that the omniscient person does so or not.[70] When the apprehension of the omniscient person through extraordinary cognition itself is not evident, there is no use in inferring whether he perceives all things simultaneously or successively.

Either "the power of perceiving all things" itself does not exist, or, if it exists, it should be present in all persons.[71] Consequently, all persons should know all things. But it is a fact that all people do not know all things.[72] Thus the Mīmāṁsakas conclude that human omniscience cannot be established by any accepted valid means of cognition.[73] When the existence of an omniscient person is not proved, the _Dharma_ cannot be known by human assertion.[74] Consequently, the teachings of the Buddha or any other so-called omniscient person cannot be taken as authority for _Dharma_.

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[70] pratyakṣam anumānaṁ vā śābdaṁ vā tadatatkṛtaṁ;
pramāṇaṁ asya sadbhāve nāstīti nastī tādṛśaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3257.

[71] _Ibid._, Verse 3258.

[72] _Ibid._, Verse 3259.

[73] _Ibid._, Verse 3260.

[74] itthaṁ yadā na sarvajñaḥ kaścidapyupapadyate;
na dharmādhigame hetuḥ pauruṣeyam tadā vacaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3261.

These are the possible objections that can be lodged against the concept of omniscience. The Mīmāṁsakas have raised these objections and have refuted the possibility of omniscience in any being, as well as the omniscience of the Buddha, through logical reasoning. Now we shall look at the Buddhist point of view. First we will see that omniscience is important to the school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Then we will proceed by discussing the concept of human omniscience as well as the omniscience of the Buddha according to Mahāyāna Buddhism in order to prove the authority of Buddhism as true Dharma.

CHAPTER V

BUDDHISTS' ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN OMNISCIENCE

In the previous chapter we outlined the arguments which the Mīmāṁsakas made against the possible existence of an omniscient person. They argue from what is logically possible and impossible and from what for them is the only accepted authority for truth regarding Dharma and Adharma, that is, the Vedas. Now we must show how the Buddhists attempt to meet these objections to their thesis that human omniscience is possible and the Buddha is the only omniscient religious teacher of Dharma. In this chapter we will try to show logical arguments offered by the Buddhists, for example, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, to support the concept of human omniscience.

In order to establish the possibility of human omniscience, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have set forth various modes of argument. First, they give the definition and criterion of an omniscient person. Second, they establish that the possibility of human omniscience cannot be denied by any of the valid means of cognition.

Who is an omniscient person? Holding the Buddhist view, Śāntarakṣita claims that that particular person should be called omniscient who has the true knowledge of all the objects and whose knowledge has been found quite reasonable and satisfactory after careful examination. These criteria of an omniscient person, he asserts, cannot be

contradicted.[1]

In fact, omniscience means the true and perfect knowledge of each and every object without exception. The true knower cannot misconceive anything.[2] Only an omniscient person can be a true knower of everything. That is why Śāntarakṣita holds that that person is omniscient who knows the real nature of the universe as soulless, momentary and full of suffering.[3]

Kamalaśīla further adds that that person alone should be regarded as omniscient whose teachings cannot be contradicted by any valid means of cognition.[4]

What is the criterion to determine whether or not a particular person is omniscient? The Buddhists hold, says Śāntarakṣita, that the criterion of an omniscient person is that he imparts teaching regarding heaven (svarga) and liberation (apavarga) very clearly and distinctly because he knows their real significance. Otherwise, there is no use in finding out a person who possesses the knowledge of other things than the above, for instance, the knowledge of the number of sands of

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[1] samyak sarvapadārthānāṁ tattvajñānācca sarvavit;
hetāvato na sambodhyā sandigdhavyatirekitā.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3330.

[2] Pañjikā, 3330, p. 867.

[3] anirdiṣṭaviśeṣo 'pi sarvajnah ko 'pi sambhavet;
yo yathāvat jagatsarvaṁ vettyanātmādirūpataḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3337.

[4] Pañjikā, 3151, p. 823.

the ocean.[5] It is their conviction that the knowledge of an omniscient person regarding prosperity, heaven, liberation, Dharma, self and other supersensuous truths is untrammelled by normal experience.[6] An omniscient person is one who apprehends the true nature of all things of the past, present and future. He perceives existing things as existent, and non-existing things of the past and future as non-existent. In other words, the cognition of an omniscient person is unlimited.[7] He is called omniscient because he knows all actions with their causes and effects through a single extraordinary cognition produced by meditation and communion (samādhi).[8]

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, the expounders of Buddhism, hold that only an omniscient person can perceive Dharma, because he knows each and every thing about the universe including supersensuous truths like Dharma, heaven, and liberation. In fact, by proving the existence of an omniscient person through logical arguments they do not mean to seek a man who knows everything other than Dharma. Their main aim is

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[5] svargāpavargamātrasya vispaṣṭamupadeśataḥ;
pradhānārthaparijñānatsarvajña iti gamyate.
samudrasikatāsaṅkhyāvijñānaṁ kvopayujyate;
tasyāsmākamato'nyārthajñānasaṁvedanena kim.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3528-3529.

[6] yasmādabhyudaye mokṣe sahaitaiḥ sādhitaṁ puraḥ;
jñānamapratigham teṣāmāvainikamatisphuṭam.
Ibid., Verse 3533.

[7] ekajñānakṣaṇavyāptaniḥśeṣajñeyamaṇḍalah;
prasādhito hi sarvajñaḥ kramo nāśriyate tataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3657; cf. Pañjikā, 3627, p. 929.

[8] sahetu saphalaṁkarma jñānenālaukikena yah;
samādhijena jānāti sa sarvajño'padiśyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3638.

to search for a person who knows Dharma. This is possible only through an omniscient person. The mind of an omniscient person becomes free from the hindrances of affliction (kleśāvaraṇa) and the cognisable things (jñeyāvaraṇa). On account of the latter, Dharma and other supersensuous realities are revealed to his consciousness.[9]

Is it possible to apprehend supersensuous realities? Certainly it is not possible through normal vision. However, it is possible for an omniscient person, because he removes the hindrances of cognisable things by the practice of yoga. The Buddhists hold that the manifestation of supersensuous truths is possible because of the illuminative characteristic of knowledge. In other words, the nature of knowledge is that of light. It is clear (nirmala) because it is free from the hindrances of affliction and the cognisable things. It is not shaken by the force of passion. Just like a lamp, it throws light on the objects.[10]

Therefore, it is quite possible for an omniscient person to have direct knowledge of supersensuous truths like Dharma and others, because he acquires perfect wisdom by the means of yoga.

How can a person be the perceiver of Dharma when he also perceives the unclean things like taste and others simultaneously? In fact, an omniscient person perceives only through the mind without the help of sense-contact with the objects. He may not be detracted from his situation as the perceiver of Dharma, even if he has the sense contact

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[9] Pañjikā, 3267, p. 847.

[10] Ibid., 3269, p. 847.

with the objects, because the objects of the world are only illusory. The objects of the world are only manifestations of consciousness (vijñāna). Therefore, his five-fold actions are not influenced by the afflictions, and his mind also cannot be disordered by perceiving impure things, because he perceives the objects of the world in their real illusory form.[11] This objection is possible only on the theory of realism where matter is conceived as eternal and real. But it is not applicable in idealism in which the Buddhists believe that the world arises only from consciousness. The omniscient person removes all the impurities and realizes the absolute reality, so he does not perceive the objects in the same form as they appear in the apprehension of ordinary men as real.[12]

Śāntarakṣita does not agree with the view of the Mīmāṁsakas that the omniscient person is not perceived by any of the valid means of cognition (pramāṇa) except non-apprehension, so only the omniscient eternal Vedas should be accepted as the authority for Dharma. His first argument is that according to the view of the Mīmāṁsakas the author of the Vedas would have to be a person who has the power of perceiving supersensuous truths. In other words, he should be omniscient, because he is supposed to know the true nature of all things.[13]

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[11]bhūtārthabhāvanodbhūtamānasenaiva cetasā;
aprāptā eva vedyante ninditā api saṁvṛtau.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3319.

[12]Pañjikā, 3319, pp. 864-65.

[13]ittham yadā na sarvajñaḥ kaścidapyupapadyate;
na dharmādhigame hetuḥ pauruṣeyaṁ tadā vacaḥ.
iti mīmāṁsakāḥ prāhuḥ svatantra śrutilālasā;
vistareṇa ca vedānāṁ sādhitā pauruṣeyatā.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3261-3262.

The Buddhists have already proved that the author of the Vedas can be only a person who has acquired the knowledge of supersensuous truths like Dharma. Thus it follows that the existence of an omniscient person must be accepted who is the direct perceiver (sākṣāt-draṣṭā) of supersensuous truths. It is not possible to perceive anything through the Vedas.[14]

His second argument is that it is not possible to know Dharma and other supersensuous truths through the Vedas. In fact, the Vedas which are considered to be omniscient and eternal words by the Mīmāṁsakas are impossible. Even if it is accepted that there is a possibility of having the eternal Vedas, even then it is not proper to accept that they are the means of knowing the supersensuous truths, like Dharma, Svarga and Mokṣa. They cannot reveal their meanings in succession, because when the cause is present, there, the effect should appear all at once. Again, in that case they will reveal the first effect over and again even at the succeeding moments. Furthermore, the capacity of revealing their meanings is not inherent in the Vedas. Otherwise they should reveal their meanings simultaneously. Also, the capacity of revealing their meanings cannot be due to any other instrumental cause, because that capacity is not considered different from the very nature of the Vedas. Even if the instrumental cause is accepted, there could be no relationship between it and the Vedas.[15]

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[14] tasmādatīndriyārthānāṁ sākṣāddraṣṭaiva vidyate;
natu nityena vacasā kascit pasyatyasambhavāt.
Ibid., Verse 3263.

[15] Nityasya vacasah śaktir na svato vāpi nānyatah;
svārthajñāne samutpādye kramākramavirodhataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3264, and Pañjikā, 3264, p. 846.

It follows from the above statement that the Vedas can be accepted as authority for Dharma only when they are written by an omniscient person. The author of the Vedas who reveals heaven, sacrifice and other supersensuous truths must be a person who has realized them first; or he should know the significance of Prakṛti and Puruṣa. Or he should be knower of all Dharmas. Otherwise the reliability of the Vedas cannot be accepted.[16]

Thus the Mīmāṁsakas are wrong in holding the view that the concept of human omniscience is an impossibility. His existence cannot be denied in all three times -- past, present and future -- by any valid means of cognition. It is wrong to say that a particular object does not exist, because it is not seen.[17] According to the Buddhists, there is the highest stage of wisdom which constitutes omniscience. Therefore, the objection lodged by the Mīmāṁsakas against the concept of human omniscience is not applicable here.[18]

The Valid Means of Cognition (Pramāṇa)

The concept of human omniscience cannot be disproved by any of the valid means of cognition, viz., perception (pratyakṣa), inference

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[16] svargayāgādayas tasmāt svato jñātvā prakāśitāḥ,
vedakārastavāpyasti tādṛśo'tīndriyārthadṛk.
pradhānapuruṣārthajña sarvadharmajña eva vā;
tasyānupagame na syād veda prāmāṇyam anyathā.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3265-3266.

[17] tenārthāpattilabdhena dharmajñopagamena tu;
bādhyate tanniṣedho'yam vistareṇa kṛtastvayā.
Ibid., Verse 3503.

[18] prajñādīnām ca dharmitvam kṛtvā liṅgamudīritam;
nanā (tannāma?) dṛśyate liṅgaṃ na ca sattā prasi (sā?) dhyate.
Ibid., Verse 3509.

(anumāna), presumption (arthāpatti), analogy (upamāna), scripture or words (śabda) or non-apprehension (abhāva).

1. Perception (pratyakṣa)

The concept of human omniscience cannot be disproved by perception. There can be no annulment in a case where perception is not applicable at all. The cognitions appearing in the minds of other people are not perceived by a person who is not omniscient. The conclusion which is deduced from the inapplicability of perception is quite different from the conclusion which is brought about by the application of perception. In fact, applicability and non-applicability are contrary to each other and cannot co-exist in one and the same thing. Again the inapplicability of perception is not invariably concomitant with the non-existence of the thing concerned, because the perception is inapplicable, if the thing is hidden or remote. The statement that "perception having ceased proves the non-existence",[19] does not mean that perception has disappeared from the present state. The Buddhists have already proved that the past and future things do not exist at all. There would not be any perception of what is non-existent. Secondly, the meaning of the statement may be accepted in the sense that though existing at the present moment it does not appear in connection with a certain thing. Even so, it cannot prove the non-existence of the thing in question. The visual perception does not appear in connection with odour or taste. But this does not prove that these latter do not exist at all. Thus perception cannot prove the non-existence of

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[19] Pañjikā, 3268, p. 848.

anything. Śāntarakṣita says that the Buddhists declare the non-existence of a jar or anything else on the basis of perception itself, in the form of non-apprehension. When two things are capable of figuring in the same cognition, the appearance of one implies the non-existence of the other. But the omniscience appearing in the same cognition with something else is never cognized. Thus Śāntarakṣita concludes that the non-existence of human omniscience cannot be deduced by the presence of any other thing.[20]

2. Inference (anumāna)

Inference also cannot disprove human omniscience, for it always envisages affirmation. Negation is envisaged by non-apprehension only. It can be said that inference is not absolute negation but only the relative negation. In other words, it is the negation of omniscience in relation to all men. Even so, inference is not possible. No "mark" (liṅga) is known to be present in all men, which is invariably concomitant with omniscience.[21]

3. Presumption (arthāpatti)

Presumption, too, cannot negate human omniscience. First, the Buddhists do not admit of any means of cognition apart from perception and inference. Second, presumption is based upon the idea that a certain seen or heard fact is explicable only on the basis of the unseen

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[20] Ibid., 3268, pp. 848-49.

[21] Ibid., 3268, p. 849

factors. But there is no factor among men which can cause us to presume the non-existence of human omniscience.[22]

4. Analogy (upamāna)

Nor can analogy reject the concept of human omniscience. A man apprehends by analogical cognition either the remembered thing having for its adjunct the similarity of the thing which is present before the eyes, or mere similarity of the thing before the eyes with the remembered thing. Thus what is remembered and perceived as similar is the object of analogical cognition.[23] Nobody can know the cognitions occurring in the minds of all men. So nobody can remember them. Nor can anybody know any such property in common with non-omniscience, on the basis of which the non-omniscient character of men could be cognized through analogy. All men may be alike on the ground of being existent, but similarity of existence does not prove their non-omniscience.[24]

The concept of human omniscience cannot be disproved by analogy. One can deny the concept of human omniscience only after seeing all men of all times, far and near. In that case he himself would be

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[22] Ibid., 3268, p. 849

[23] tasmād yatsmaryate tatsyātsādṛśyene viśeṣitaṁ;
prameyam upamānasya sādṛśyaṁ vā tadanvitaṁ.
Ślokavārtika (Upamāna, 37), quoted in Pañjikā, ibid.

[24] Pañjikā, 3268, pp. 849-50.

omniscient.[25]

5. Scripture or Words (*śabda*)

Words, as a means of cognition, cannot set aside the concept of human omniscience. The Mīmāṁsakas themselves recognize that words emanating from human beings are not reliable in supersensuous truths. The Buddhists have already proved that words which are not emanated from human beings are not reliable. Apart from this, there is no *Vedic* assertion that all men are non-omniscient. The fact that human omniscience is not mentioned in the *Vedas* cannot establish the non-omniscience of all men.[26]

6. Non-Apprehension (*abhāva*)

It is inconclusive as well as inadmissible to take non-apprehension as a proof against the concept of human omniscience. If it is used in the sense of absolute negation, then it cannot form either the cognition or the means of cogntion of the omniscient person because it is a nonentity. If it is taken to be a relative negation, even then it would not be reliable, because it would be the negation of the means of cognition. It cannot be taken as a particular form of cognition that an omniscient person does not exist, because he is not

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[25] upamānena sarvajñasattāsiddhir na cesyate;
tasyāpramāṇatāprokteh sattāsiddhis tato na ca.
prasiddhāyāṃ hi sattāyām sādṛsyam gamyate tataḥ;
sādhanaṃ prakṛtaṃ cedam sattāyāh sarvavedinaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3558-3561.

[26] *Pañjikā*, 3268, p. 850.

perceived by any one of the five means of cognition. If it is used in this sense, then it would not be a valid means of cognition.[27] Thus non-apprehension, which is taken to be a kind of inference by the Buddhists, cannot disprove the concept of human omniscience.

Now what is the meaning of non-apprehension? Does it mean the absence of one's own apprehension or the absence of the apprehension of all men? Again, is non-apprehension without any qualification or is it qualified in some way? The absence of one's own apprehension of the omniscient person cannot disprove the concept of human omniscience. Without a qualification, it is inconclusive. With a qualification, it has no substratum. The three basic forms of non-apprehension also cannot prove his non-existence. The pervader and the pervaded, the cause and the effect and contrariness are possible only when the thing concerned is perceptible.[28] Again there can be no certainity in his non-apprehension by all men. The omniscient person perceives himself by himself, because he is self-luminous.[29]

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[27]Ibid., 3269, p. 850.

[28]kāryakāraṇatā vyāpyavyāpakatva virodhitāḥ;
dṛśyatve sati siddhyanti yaścātmā saviśeṣaṇah.
sarvajño naca dṛsyaste tena naitā adṛṣṭayaḥ;
tannirākaraṇe śaktā niṣedhāṅgaṃ na cāparaṃ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3280-3281.

[29]svayamevātmanā'tmānamātmajyotiḥ sa paśyati;
ityapyāśṅkyate'taśca sarvā dṛṣṭir aniścitā.
Ibid., Verse 3290.

Inference as a Proof of Human Omniscience

Śāntarakṣita attempts to establish the concept of human omniscience by inference. Some people apprehend the omniscient person by inference. Hence there is a probability of his existence though the proof is not obvious at present.[30] Even if there is no inference, that does not mean the absence of human omniscience, because the means of cognition cannot be the cause for the existence of a thing. It cannot be said that there can be no doubt regarding the existence of only that thing which has been seen somewhere previously. In that case, one's mother's marriage becomes disproved.[31] There is always doubt, according to the Buddhists, when there is no valid means of cognition regarding the existence or non-existence of things. A man cannot cognize a thing when his eyes are not perfect. The same is true in a situation when the eyes are perfect but the object is not there. Just like the conception of other men, the omniscient person cannot be seen directly by dull-witted persons. His activity cannot be cognized just like the feeling of love arising in other men. Just like the fire in the iron ball, he is not constantly active. Again there shall be no cognition of connection of an omniscient person with action. It is for this reason that it is said that his existence cannot be proved by inference. Sometimes the concerned thing is found to exist even when the inference is

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[30] tadevaṃ śaṅkayā nāsya jñānābhāvo'pi niścitaḥ;
yato'sattvaṃ prapaśyante nirviśaṅkā hi jātayaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3295.

[31] Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3299.

inoperative, as in the case of the red-hot iron ball.[32]

The omniscience of the Buddha is argued for by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla using the logical methods of Arthāpatti (presumption) and Anumāna (inference). The Buddha is a teacher of the doctrine of the Anātmavāda (soullessness), which is the nature of all objects. Therefore, his teaching contains the essential knowledge of the true nature of all things. He has criticized the Vedic animal-sacrifice and condemned the belief in existence of the soul. Not only this, he has preached the "Four-Noble-Truths" (catvāri ārya satyāni) leading to Mokṣa. Consequently, from the above statement, it is inferred that he had true knowledge of all things, even those things which are taught in the Vedas. No one can teach these things who does not know the real nature of all things.[33]

The Dharma and other supersensuous truths might have been directly perceived by the Buddha, because he has taught them without learning them from the Vedas. Consequently, those things must have been known to him. Otherwise, it is not possible for any one to go on talking about supersensuous truths which cannot be proved by any valid means of cognition. He cannot derive his knowledge through inference, because he never perceived such things previously.[34] He has not derived

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[32] sarvārthajño yato'dṛśyah sadaiva jaḍadhidṛśām;
nāto'numānatas tasya sattā siddhiṃ prayāsyati.
ahetvavyāpakam coktam pramāṇaṃ vastuno'sya ca;
nivṛttāvasya bhāvo'pi dṛṣṭas tenāpi saṅśayaḥ.
Ibid., Verses 3305-3306.

[33] Pañjikā, 3340, pp. 876-77.

[34] śrutānumāna bhinnena sākṣāj jñānena nirmalaṃ;
munitārkṣyādi vijñānam na cet tadgaditatam katham.

his knowledge from the teachings of other teachers, because his teachings are not similar to other teachers. Again it is wrong to say that conformity with reality in his teachings is purely accidental.[35] Further, his teachings are in sequence and they fulfill the purpose of men, so it cannot be said that these teachings were asserted by a demented person. Therefore, it is inferred that the Buddha was omniscient and he did possess the knowledge of Dharma. That is why he has taught the truths which were not heard before him.[36]

It must be understood, as the Buddhists hold, that the omniscience of the Buddha does not depend on his knowledge of all objects, such as the number of insects in the world, though knowledge of such objects is also possible for him. His omniscience depends upon his everlasting knowledge of the fundamental nature of all objects. Therefore his knowledge of "soullessness" will remain constant and unchanged.[37]

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla hold that the omniscient person knows all actions with their causes and results by a single extraordinary cognition produced by Samādhi. The Buddhists have proved the

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na cānumānato jñānaṃ tasya pūrvaṃ adṛṣṭataḥ;
tena liṅgasya sambandhadarśan ānupapattitaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3453-3454.

[35] śrutvā na cānyataḥ proktam tulyaparyanuyogataḥ;
na yadṛcchā visamvādirūpam'idṛk ca bhāvitaṃ.
Ibid., Verse 3455.

[36] tasmād atiśaya jñānairupāya balavarttibhiḥ;
sarva evādhika jñātum śakyate yo'pyatīndriyaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3462.

[37] Pañjikā, 3337, p. 869.

concept of human omniscience through inference. They hold that human omniscience can be proved at least by one valid means of cognition, that is, inference. This establishes the fact that the omniscient person really exists.[38]

The Buddhists have proved the concept of human omniscience on the basis of inference and not on the basis of the scriptural declarations.[39] Again Śāntarakṣita cites a scriptural declaration also, which is not found at present, read by Brāhmaṇas affirming the concept of human omniscience. Thus he establishes the omniscience of the Buddha on the basis of scripture also. Lord Buddha has been clearly mentioned as omniscient in the Vedic recensional texted called Nimitta. He has been depicted there as one who, after showing himself in a dream as a six-tusked white elephant, is born as Bodhisattva who is the ocean of good qualities: omniscient, full of compassion, pure, the father of the whole universe and reaching the state of immortality.[40]

Why have the Buddhists given logical arguments to establish

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[38] sahetu saphalaṁ karma jñānenālaukikena yaḥ;
samādhijana jānāti sa sarvajño'padiśyate.
purastād anumānena tasya sattā prasādhitā;
pramāṇam asya sadbhāve tadastītyasti tādṛśaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3638-3639.

[39] āgamena tu sarvajño nāsmād bhiḥ pratipādyate;
laiṅge sati hi pūrvokte ko namāgamato vadet.
Ibid., Verse 3510.

[40] nimittanāmni sarvajño bhagavān munisattamaḥ;
śākhāntare hi vispaṣṭaṁ daṭhyate brāhmaṇair udhaiḥ.
yo'sau saḍdantam ātmānam avadātadvipātmakaṁ;
svapne pradarśya sañjāto bodhisattvo guṇodadhiḥ.
vighuṣṭaśabdaḥ sarvajñaḥ kṛpātmā sa bhaviṣyati;
prāptāmṛtapadaḥ śuddhaḥ sarvalokapitā'pi ca.
Ibid., Verses 3512-3514.

human omniscience? Or what is the purpose of using reasoning in support of human omniscience in general, or the omniscience of the Buddha in particular? In fact, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla wanted to prove that the knowledge of supersensuous truths like Dharma, Svarga (heaven), Ātman (soul), Punarjanma (rebirth) and Mokṣa (liberation) could be accepted as authoritative if they were taught by an omniscient religious teacher. The question about the omniscience of a particular religious teacher does not arise for those who have faith in him and blindly follow his teachings regarding Dharma. However, it is essential to prove the omniscience of that particular religious teacher through logical arguments for those who do not have faith in him and question his religious authority.

In establishing the authority of the teachings of the Buddha regarding Dharma and other supersensuous truths, it was necessary for these Buddhists to verify the existence of the omniscient person and the omniscience of the Buddha who taught these religious truths which are not perceived through normal human perception.

Now is there any possibility of human omniscience? It is possible according to the Buddhists because they accept the ascending grades of wisdom. It is remarkable that not only the Buddhists but almost all the systems of Indian philosophy, except the Mīmāṁsā and Cārvāka schools, believe that a man can reach the highest wisdom through the proper practice of a particular yoga. Therefore, the Buddhists are quite consistent in believing that any person can reach the state of omniscience through the practice of yoga. In other words, every individual has the potentiality to acquire this state. This state of

omniscience is rooted in every individual just like the state of Buddhahood. In fact, omniscience is necessarily connected with the Buddhahood. The Buddhists hold that when a person becomes enlightened (the Buddha), he becomes omniscient by the removal of Kleśāvaraṇa and Jñeyāvaraṇa. On the basis of this, they quite consistently maintain that omniscience is a positive entity which is featureless.[41] Every individual can achieve the state of omniscience by a particular practice of yoga.

Furthermore, we must consider the very crucial question of whether or not the Buddha has reached the state of omniscience. The Buddhists have very convincingly believed that the intellect has the capacity to reach perfection. The intellect reaches its perfection in Samādhi and becomes one with the state of omniscience. Professor T. R. V. Murti quite consistently observes:

> There is, however, no valid objection against the existence of an omniscient person. A fact cannot be denied because it is not cognised by all and sundry. There is positive evidence of the omniscience of the Buddha; for, following the path taught by him one is freed of saṁsāra. Most of the objections against the acceptance of omniscience are based on the assumption that it is the acquisition of a new faculty, or that it is a laborious process of accretion of information. It is on the other hand a case of divesting the mind of its accidental defects which have crept into it. In itself the intellect is transparent and has natural affinity with the real.* By the contemplation of the unreality of things (nairātmya-bhāvanā) it is possible to void the intellect of all defects, kleśas. Owing to the removal

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[41] naiḥ svābhāvyo'svavittau ca nahi tajjātu jāyate;
prāk pravṛteḥ prasiddheyam evaṃ sarvajñatā bhavet.
Ibid., Verse 3357.

> of the obscuring factors omniscience shines out, as there is nothing to obstruct its vision. Those that deny omniscience really deny the possibility of the intellect to be free from defects. They must logically deny freedom (mukti) too.[42]
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> *(Footnote No. 7 in original source.) prabhāsvaram idaṁ cittaṁ tattvadarsana-sātmakam; prakṛtyaiva sthitaṁ yasmān malās tv āgantavo matāḥ. TS p. 895. (Author's note: TS p. 895 refers to Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3435.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla quite consistently hold that the inherent limitations of man's power can be transcended by the practice of yoga. Furthermore, through the concentration of the mind and the proper practices of yoga, a man can reach the highest degree of perfection in his physical as well as in his mental capacity. He acquires the capacity called "mind-force" (manojava) by using a particular method of yoga. Due to Manojava, the Buddha became as swift as the mind in its movement.[43] In the same way, by a particular practice of yoga, the Buddha transcended the limitations of perceiving objects after reaching this highest stage of perfection, that is, omniscience. By that capacity, he could perceive all objects clearly by a single cognition.[44] Thus it is evident that the Buddha reached the state of omniscience and

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[42] T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 281-82.

[43] siddhir manojavāsañjñā tathāca śruyate pramā;
yathā cintitamātreṇa yāti dūramapi prabhuḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3426; cf. Pañjikā, 3426, p. 893.

[44] ekajñānakṣaṇavyāptanihśe-ṣajñeyamaṇḍalaḥ;
surāsuraśiroratnabhūtaḥ siddho'tra sarvavit.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3449.

his teachings should be accepted as authority for Dharma.

Thus Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla offer logical arguments which successfully answer the objection lodged by the Mīmāṁsakas against the Buddhist conception of human omniscience. In addition, they have dialectically established the complete validity of human omniscience. Their aim is to prove that the Buddha is the only omniscient religious teacher. Before proving the omniscience of the Buddha they have established the possibility of human omniscience. They hold that a person can reach the state of omniscience by reaching the highest grade of intellect through the means of yoga. On this ground they establish the concept of human omniscience through logical arguments.

CHAPTER VI

THE BUDDHA AS THE ONLY OMNISCIENT RELIGIOUS TEACHER

In the previous chapter, we have already seen that the Mīmāṁsakas have refuted the omniscience of the Buddha as well as the possibility of human omniscience through logical reasoning, so now we shall look at the Buddhist point of view.

To answer the objections of the Mīmāṁsakas, the Buddhist philosophers, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, have demonstrated the omniscience of the Buddha by their logical arguments. Their primary aim is to prove that the Buddha is the only omniscient teacher who has taught the "true religion" (saddharma). In this chapter we will indicate that they have offered further arguments to show that the Buddha was the only omniscient teacher, because his teachings are without defect. The other religious teachers cannot be called omniscient because their teachings have been proven self-contradictory by the Buddhists.

The Buddha knew the means of attaining Svarga (heaven) and Mokṣa (liberation) because of his omniscience. His knowledge is not hampered by any obstacles. He is omniscient because he has removed the hindrances of affliction and of cognisable things. There would be no defect in the teachings of a person who has realized Anātmavāda (soullessness), as there would be no darkness when the lamp is there.[1]

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[1]pratyakṣīkṛta nairātmye na doṣo labhate sthitiṃ;
tadviruddhatayā dīpe pradīpe timiraṃ yathā.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3338; cf. also, Pañjikā, 3338, pp. 869-70.

Both Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla maintain that any person can reach the state of omniscience by a particular practice of yoga which is capable of destroying the hindrance of cognisable things. They are not holding a unique view because this possibility of human omniscience is accepted by almost all schools of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka and Mīmāṁsā. In accepting the possibility of human omniscience, they hold that the intellect (buddhi) has the capacity to transcend its own limitation and to become identified with the Absolute Reality. This intuitive realization of the Absolute Reality is the state of omniscience. On the basis of this, they are quite consistent in establishing the Buddha, who claims to realize the ultimate reality, as an omniscient religious teacher.

The claim by the respective followers of Vardhamāna, the Jaina teacher, Kapila, the Sāṅkhya teacher, and Kaṇāda, the Vaiśeṣika teacher, that they are omniscient persons, makes it doubtful as to who is the real omniscient religious teacher. It is very difficult to determine among all these teachers who is omniscient only on the basis of their teachings of Dharma, because their teachings radically differ from each other. If all these teachers are omniscient, then it logically follows that there should not be any difference of opinion in their teachings of Dharma and the nature of the universe.[2] However, there is disagreement between their teachings regarding supersensuous truths. Therefore, it is very difficult to know who is really an omniscient teacher.

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[2] Pañjikā, 3148, p. 822.

The Buddha and the Other Religious Teachers

The Buddhists do not say that the Buddha alone is capable of achieving the state of omniscience. Any person may become omniscient who perceives the truth of "soullessness" which leads to liberation. However, the poets and the teachers of false doctrines cannot be called omniscient because they have not realized the Parama Tattva (absolute reality).[3] Vardhamāna, Kapila and other teachers have not taught the doctrine of "soullessness". Instead, they hold the doctrine of the soul which is the root of all evils. Not only this, but they have asserted that things are permanent, which is disproved by valid means of cognition.[4] So these religious teachers cannot be called omniscient, because they have expounded wrong doctrines regarding the true nature of things.[5]

The aim of the Buddhists is not to prove that other religious teachers are not omniscient. They only show the defects in their teachings. In fact, it is their assertion that any particular person should be accepted as omniscient who knows the true nature of everything on account of his realization of the absolute truth. In other words,

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[3] Īdṛkca paramam tattvam jānanti kavayo yadi;
pradhāna puruṣārtha jñān sarvajñān ko na manyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3324.

[4] idam ca varddhamānāder nairātmyajñānam īdṛśam;
na samastyātmadṛṣṭau hi vinaṣṭāḥ sarva tīrthikāḥ.
syādvādākṣaṇikasyā (tvā?) di pratyakṣādi prabo (bā?) dhitam;
bahvevāyuktāmuktam yaiḥ syuḥ sarvajñāḥ katham nu te.
Ibid., Verses 3325-3326.

[5] Asarvajñatvamevaṃ tu a (pra?) spaṣṭa mavagamyate;
mithyājñānānuṣaṅgitvād viparīta prakāśanāt.
Ibid., Verse 3328.

they do not intend to say that only the Buddha should be accepted as omniscient. In principle, they accept the possibility of human omniscience.[6]

All other religious teachers have expounded the true nature of the universe in their teachings. The Buddhists have proved their doctrines as defective and full of contradiction. Therefore, other teachers should not be accepted as omniscient persons. Only the teachings of the Buddha are not disproved by reasoning because of his direct knowledge of the true nature of the things of the universe. So only the Buddha should be accepted as an omniscient religious teacher.[7]

The Buddhists hold that any person who knows the whole universe as "soulless" may be called omniscient without any distinction.[8] According to Kamalaśīla, only the Buddha fulfills this condition of becoming omniscient. In fact, only the Buddha and none else, fulfills all the conditions of an omniscient person, because only he has expounded through various means the truth about what should be sought for and what should be rejected. He has taught the "Four Noble Truths" as a perfect means for that.[9] Therefore, only the Buddha should be accepted as an

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[6] anātmakṣaṇikatvādī yadyevaṁ sarvadarśinaḥ;
sākṣatsamastavastūnaṁ tattvarūpasya darśanāt.
Ibid., Verse 3332, and Pañkikā, 3332-3333, p. 868.

[7] pratipāditarūpasya sarvavastugatasya ca;
sākṣāttattvasya vijñānāt sugataḥ sarvadarśinaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3334.

[8] anirdiṣṭaviśeso'pi sarvajñaḥ ko'pi saṁbhavet;
yo yathāvat jagatsarvaṁ vettyanātmādirūpataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3337.

[9] Pañjikā, 3337, p. 869.

omniscient religious teacher.

A man cannot teach about the true and perfect nature of a thing unless he knows its true nature. So far as supersensuous truths are concerned, it is extremely difficult to know them.[10] Only the Buddha has expounded the true nature of worldly things and supersensuous realities like Dharma, heaven and liberation. That is why he has been accepted as the only omniscient religious teacher.

The Buddha cannot be compared with other religious teachers who have expounded false doctrines which are disproved by valid means of cognition. He has expounded the true doctrine which is supported by valid means of cognition, because his teachings are based on his realization of the truth.[11]

He has propounded the perfect method of meditation upon "soullessness", which is the means to achieve prosperity and the highest good or liberation. The real nature of things is exactly as it has been taught by him. His teachings are not different from the real nature of things to the slightest degree when examined.[12]

The words of the Buddha are like jewels which destroy the darkness of wrong ideas. That is why he has been called omniscient by wise persons. He is the real knower of the Prakṛti and the Puruṣa, and has

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[10] "parokṣdpeyataddhetostadākhyānam hi duṣkaram". Cited in Pañjikā, 3337, p. 869.

[11] tena pramāṇasaṁvāditattvadarśanayoginā;
na tulyahetutā'nyeṣaṁ viruddhārthopadeśinaṁ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3341.

[12] saṁbaddhanuguṇopāyam puruṣārthābhidhāyakaṁ;
dṛṣṭe'pyarthe pramāṇābhyāmiṣadapyaprabādhitaṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3343.

been called the great physician. Due to his superiority of knowledge, the Buddha, who is a suppressor of Māra (desire) is distinct from Ṛṣabha, Kapila, Vardharmāna and other religious teachers because they have not taught the above mentioned doctrine.[13]

On the basis of his teachings, which are claimed by them to be the only perfect teachings, because they are not refuted by any valid means of cognition, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have tried to prove by logical arguments that the Buddha was the only omniscient religious teacher. Other schools of Indian thought, however, also have given equally convincing arguments in support of the omniscience of their respective teachers. For instance, the Jainas have argued to prove that Vardharmāna was the only omniscient teacher on the basis of his teachings which they claim, just like the Buddhists, to be the only perfect teachings. This type of claim by various schools of Indian thought creates doubt as to who is the real omniscient religious teacher.

The Buddha and the Vedic Ṛṣis

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla do not accept the concept of any similarity between the Buddha and the Ṛṣis of the Vedas.[14] The significance of the Buddha is that he perceived the Dharma by himself and

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[13] sugatas tena kapilo neti tu pramā;
anantaroditā vyaktā'pyeṣā mūḍhair na lakṣitā.
Ibid., Verse 3347.

[14] Pañjikā, 3484, p. 903.

expounded his doctrine in public due to compassion.[15] Now it may be asked, what is the proof that the Buddha himself and not others, expounded the Dharma? To answer this question from the Buddhist point of view, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have accepted the same definition of the Dharma which is mentioned in the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra and which is commonly accepted by all systems of Indian thought, i.e., that Dharma is that means by which prosperity and the highest good are achieved.[16] And they have shown that the said definition is only applicable to the teachings of the Buddha.

The teachings of the Buddha are the only means of knowing the Dharma, which gives prosperity in this life. The incantations (mantra), prescribed by him, give wisdom, health and power, when they are properly practiced.[17] His teachings also lead to the highest good after this life. The highest good or liberation is the absolute cessation of the series of births and rebirths. The teachings of the Buddha are the only means to attain liberation, because only he has taught the doctrine of "no-soul" which destroys the "afflictions"[18] which are the causes of the

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[15] yadvā'styeva viśeṣo'yaṁ manau tadvacaneṣu ca;
sa dṛṣṭavān svayaṁ dharmamuktavāṅsca kṛpāmayaḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3485.

[16] yato'bhyudayaniṣpattir yato niḥśreyasasya ca;
sa dharma ucyate tādṛksarvaireva vicakṣaṇaiḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3486.

[17] tadukta mantra yogādi niyamād vidhivat kṛtāt;
prajñā-rogya vibhutvādi dṛṣṭa dharmo'pi jāyate.
Ibid., Verse 3487.

[18] samasta dharma nairātmya darśanāt tat prakāśitāt;
satkārya darśanodbhūta kleśaughasya nivarttanaṃ.
Ibid., Verse 3488.

circle of birth and rebirth. All other religious teachers hold the doctrine of a permanent soul which has been proven false by the Buddhists. Therefore, the teachings of the Buddha are the only indicator of Dharma which leads to prosperity and highest good or liberation.[19] Thus they prove that the highest good or liberation is possible only in the teachings of the Buddha.

Liberation cannot be achieved by the teachings of the Vedic Ṛṣis, because it follows from the cessation of the Ahaṁ (I-notion). They believe in the existence of the soul which is the root cause of "I-notion". There is very little possibility for attaining prosperity through their teachings on account of the destruction of the ten sins (daśākuśalahānitaḥ). But there is not even the least possibility for attaining the highest good, because they believe in the existence of the soul which cannot destroy the afflictions.[20] The description of the "ten good actions" (daśaśubha-karma) of the Buddhists is very powerful because they have been taught by the Buddha after realizing the truth.[21] The afflictions can be destroyed only by following the teachings of the Buddha and not

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[19]tanmūlakleśarāśiśca hetvabhāvāt pratī (hi?) yate;
tasminnasati taddhetur na punr jāyate bhavaḥ;
tadatyanta vinirmukter apavargaśca kīrttyate.
Ibid., Verses 3492-3493.

[20]tasmādanyeṣu tīrtheṣu daśākuśala hānitaḥ;
leśato'bhyudaya prāptir yadya-pyasti laghīyasī,
apavargasya tu prāptir na manāgapi vidyate;
sattvad dṛṣṭi viśiṣṭatvāt kleśa mūlāna poddhṛteḥ.
Ibid., Verses 3496-3497.

[21]daśa karma yathā proktāḥ śubhā ye tāyinā dunaḥ,
samyagdṛṣṭyupagūḍhāste balavanto bhavantyalaṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3498.

by following the teachings of the Vedic Ṛṣis. Therefore, the teachings of the Buddha are the only means to lead to the highest good or liberation.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, unlike the Buddha, do not accept the Vedic Ṛṣis as omniscient. They have drawn this distinction between them on the basis of their teachings. They hold that only the Buddha and not the Vedic Ṛṣis should be accepted as authority for Dharma because he is omniscient. They maintain that the omniscient Buddha has expounded his teachings regarding Dharma after realizing the Ultimate Reality. Therefore, his words regarding supersensuous truths are authorities.

In fact, these Buddhist authors have failed to realize that the teachings of the Vedic Ṛṣis are also based on intuitive realization. The Vedic Ṛṣis have also realized the Absolute Truth in Samādhi and call it the Vedas or Śrutis.

The Vedic Ṛṣis also claim that prosperity and highest good are achieved through their teachings of Dharma. They also accept that freedom (mukti) is the final aim of human life. The freedom is achieved by the knowledge of Ultimate Truth (brahman or ātman). When the soul (ātman) is associated with ignorance (avidyā) then it is called ego (jīva), because it is associated with the "I-notion" (ahaṅkāra). When the ignorance of the Jīva is destroyed through knowledge (jñāna), his "I-notion" vanishes and he realized his true nature, that is, the Ātman. This is the state of liberation. It can be said from the side of the Vedic Ṛṣis that liberation is possible only when the existence of Ātman is admitted. Otherwise, who will be liberated?

Thus it is not consistent to hold, as the Buddhists do, that liberation or highest good is possible only in the teachings of the Buddha and not in the teachings of the Vedic Ṛṣis. The Vedic Ṛṣis are also claimed, like the Buddha, to be omniscient because of the realization of the Absolute Truth. The omniscience of a person can be judged only by one who has become enlightened. At the same time, the teachings of the Buddha regarding Dharma cannot be disproved by common people, because he has been claimed to be omniscient on account of his enlightenment by the Buddhists.

The Buddha and the Hindu Gods

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, as the expounders of the Buddhist view, severely attack the Mīmāṁsakas' belief that omniscience can be attributed to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva because they are immortal gods and embodiments of the Vedas which consists in the true knowledge of all things. On the other hand, the Mīmāṁsakas assert that omniscience cannot be ascribed to mortal beings such as the Buddha, whose knowledge is not based on the authority of the Vedas.[22] He claims that it cannot be proved that these gods are the embodiments of the Vedas. They are different from each other and are considered eternal and are not dependent

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[22] athāpi vedadehatvād brahmaviṣṇu maheśvarāḥ;
sarva jñānamayād vedāt sarvajñā mānuṣasya kiṃ.
kva ca buddhādayo martyāḥ kva ca devottama trayaṃ;
yena tatsparddhayā te'pi sarvajñā iti mohadṛk.
Ibid., Verses 3208-3209.

upon each other.[23] Thus it is absurd to say that these gods are the embodiment of the Vedas, because there is no relation between the gods and the Vedas. There can be no relation of identity, because they are different. There can also be no causal relation because both are considered eternal. At the same time, the Vedas also cannot be called omniscient for the meaning cannot be ascertained.[24]

These Buddhists argue that there is no comparison between the Buddha on the one hand and Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva on the other, because these gods are considered omniscient on the basis of the Vedas which are not considered omniscient by the Buddhists. The omniscience of the Buddha is based on his real enlightenment achieved by his own effort.[25]

Again they assert that it is wrong to say that the Buddha is mortal. He is beyond the "five-fold cycle of the world" (pañchagatyātmasaṅsāra-bahir). Therefore, he cannot be considered mortal. It is only the Nirmāṇakāya (assumed body) which appears in human form, such as that of Siddhārtha, that can be called mortal.[26] When the Saṁbhoga-

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[23]brahmādīnām cavedena sambandho nāsti kaścana;
bhedān nityatayā'peksāviyogācca tadanyavat.
Ibid., Verse 3547.

[24]tataśca vedadehatvam brahmādīnām asaṅgataṃ;
sarva jñānamayatvaṃ ca vedasyārthāviniścayāt.
Ibid., Verse 3548.

[25]svātantryeṇa ca sambuddhaḥ sarvajña upapāditaḥ;
na punar vedadehatvād brahmādiriva kalpyate.
Ibid., Verse 3549.

[26]pañcagatyātmasaṅsārabahirbhāvānna martyatā;
buddhānāmiṣyate'smābhir nirmāṇaṁ tattathāmataṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3550.

Kāya (body of the bliss) of the Buddha rejects its pious habitation in the heaven, Akāniṣtha,[27] then it appears in the form of the Nirmāṇakāya of the Buddha which is subject to birth and death and thus mortal.[28] The Dharma-Kāya (cosmical body which is the absolute reality) and the Sambhoga-Kāya of the Buddha are not mortal. Thus the mortality of the Buddha cannot be proved. Furthermore, his immortality is proved by the Buddhist scriptures.[29]

They further add that the statement of the Mīmāṁsakas that the human omniscience is impossible cannot be supported by proof. They hold that the existence of these gods cannot be proved because they are considered eternal. An eternal entity is conceived by the Buddhists to be non-existent, because it has no capacity of production either successively or simultaneously.[30] Even if these gods exist, they cannot be compared with the Buddha. Their knowledge is wrong, because they believe in the existence of the soul. It has been already proved that the knowledge of the Buddha is true, because he does not believe in the

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[27]According to the Buddhist mythology, Akāniṣtha is the name of a particular heaven where only pure beings dwell. On the top of this heaven lies the Maheśvara-Bhavana which is the palace of the Supreme God (the Buddha). Pañjikā, 3551, p. 916.

[28]akaniṣṭhe pure vamye śuddhāvāsavivarjite;
buddhyante tatra saṁbuddha nirmitastviha budhyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3551.

[29]svātantryena tu marttyatvaṃ tvayā niścīyate kathaṃ;
parakīyagamādvāranna tasyaivamavasthite.
Ibid., Verse 3552.

[30]sarvaśaktiviyogena nirūpatvam hi sādhitam;
nityānāṃ tena no santi pareṣṭas tryambakādayaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3554.

existence of the soul.[31]

The Buddha and Hindu Religious Teachers

The Buddhists say that the teachings of the Buddha and the teachings of the Hindu teachers also cannot be compared.

Manu and other Hindu teachers, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla hold, influenced by greed, fear, hatred and jealousy, lacked compassion. They were partial in their teachings,[32] imparting their knowledge to the Brāhmaṇas alone. Their teachings to the Brāhmaṇas alone indicated that they had imparted their teachings under a delusion, for they were not sure who were the real Brāhmaṇas.[33] They realized that the Vedas were not reasonable and comprehensible. They realized also that the Brāhmaṇas who had become dull-witted by the readings of the Vedas were not able to discriminate things for themselves. This was why they had imparted their teachings to the Brāhmaṇas alone.[34] Realizing the fact that the Vedas and Dharmaśāstra are not based on reason, they declared,

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[31] kiñca teṣām viparyastaṁ jñānamātmādidarśanāt;
buddhānāṁ tvaviparyastaṁ vistareṇopapāditaṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3555.

[32] ye hi lobha bhaya dveṣa mātsaryādi vaśīkṛtāḥ;
pradeśikī bhavetteṣām deśanā niḥkṛpātmanām.
Ibid., Verse 3570.

[33] ato manvādayo'pyeṣām avijñāta dvijātayaḥ;
nopadeśam prayaccheyur dvijebhyas tadaniścayāt.
Ibid., Verse 3581.

[34] niryuktikatvaṁ vedārthe jñāpanāsaktatā'tmani;
vedādhītijaḍā viprā na parīkṣākṣamā iti.
kutaścinniścitaṁ śaṅke nūnaṁ manvādibhistataḥ;
viprebhya eva vedādeḥ kṛtaṁ tairupadeśanaṁ.
Ibid., Verses 3582-3583.

in their own words, that the Purāṇa, the Dharmaśāstra, the Vedas with their subsidiaries and the medical science were self-sufficient commandments; these four could not be condemned by reasoning.[35]

On the other hand, the Buddha imparted his teachings to all people without any distinction on account of his compassion. He had no fear of contradiction in his teachings, because he had realized the truth. A person becomes real Brāhmaṇa by following the teachings of the Buddha. In fact, the Buddha had imparted his teachings to the real Brāhmaṇas and not to Manu and other religious teachers of Hindus. A Brāhmaṇa is one who has removed all his sins. Such Brāhmaṇas are possible only under the teachings of the Buddha, for he taught the destruction of all sins by constant practice upon "soullessness". He has described four kinds of Śramaṇas: Srotāpanna, Sakṛdāgāmī, Anāgāmī and Arhat. Furthermore, these four kinds of Śramaṇas are really the four kinds of Brāhmaṇas. It is useless to say that they both are different.[36]

Thus the Buddhists (Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) establish that the Buddha alone is omniscient because his teachings are the only true Dharma, the only perfect teachings that lack nothing. Only he has realized the unreality of the universe and has taught the "four noble truths".

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[35] purāṇaṁ mānavo dharmaḥ sāṅgo vedaścikitsitaṁ;
ajñāsiddhāni catvāri na hantavyāni hetubhiḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3584.

[36] ye ca vāhitapāpatvād brāhmaṇāḥ pāramārthikāḥ;
abhyastāmalanairātmyāste munereva śāsane.
ihaiva śramaṇāstena caturddhā parikīrttyate;
śūnyāḥ parapravādā hi śramaṇairbrāhmaṇais tathā.
Ibid., Verses 3589-3590.

The universe, according to him, is only the embodiment of Pañca-Skandha ("five groups") and is full of suffering. Desire is the cause of all suffering which leads to the cycle of birth and rebirth. But suffering can be removed by realizing "soullessness". On account of these things, he has been considered the leading philosopher.[37]

The teachings of the Buddha are pure and in his teachings he has taught the doctrine of "soullessness" which has not been contradicted by any of the valid means of cognition. This type of teaching is not known to any man of the world, even to Lord Kṛṣṇa. That is why the Buddha is worshipped by wise men.[38] Because his teachings are victorious over evil forces and are the cause of all kinds of prosperity and the attainment of liberation, a person who has taught them cannot be any ordinary man. There is no place for any doubt that he is omniscient and he is the only omniscient religious teacher.[39]

The Buddha as the Only Omniscient Religious Teacher

The Buddhists refute the view of the Mīmāṁsakas that claims that

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[37]etacca sugatasyeṣtmādau nairātmyakīrttanāt;
sarvatīrthakṛtaṁ tasmāt sthito mūrdhni tathāgataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3340.

[38]svabhyastadharmanairātmyā yasyeyaṁ deśanā'malā;
sādhitā sarvaśāstreṣu sarvamānair abādhitā.
sansāryanucitajnānā keśavāderagocaraḥ;
śirobhirarcyate saktyā yācatīva manīṣibhiḥ.
Ibid., Verses 3641-3642.

[39]samasta duritārātivarga bhaṅgavidhāyint;
citrābhyudaya niṣpatti nirvāṇa prāptikāraṇaṃ.
labdhāsādhāraṇopāyo'śeṣa puṅsām viśeṣa (lakṣ?) ṇaḥ;
sa ekaḥ sarvavinnātha ityetat sapramāṇakaṃ.
Ibid., Verses 3643-3644.

only the impersonal Vedas should be accepted as authority for Dharma, because they are omniscient. They hold that the omniscience of the Buddha and eternity of the Vedas also cannot be put on the same level, because they are not identical. If the Vedas were eternal, then alone the omniscience of the Buddha could be compared with them. However, no wise man has placed them both on the same footing. The permanence of the Vedas has been disproved by the Buddhists. They argue that a permanent thing would produce the cognition and its effect simultaneously. But the Vedas produce their cognition in succession. Therefore, the Vedas are not eternal and cannot be compared with the omniscience of the Buddha.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have argued that the Buddha is the only omniscient religious teacher because he has expounded the true doctrines which are not disproved by any valid means of cognition. Other religious teachers and Vedic Ṛṣis should not be considered as omniscient because their teachings have been found defective when they are examined properly according to the accepted rules of logic. Since they hold this view, they quite consistently maintain that even the gods are not omniscient because they believe in the existence of a permanent soul which is against the teachings of the Buddha.

These Buddhists establish the possibility of human omniscience in order to prove that only the teachings of an omniscient person can be accepted as an authority for Dharma.[40] They have done this by proving

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[40] itthaṁ yadā ca sarvajñah kaścidevopapadyate;
dharmādyadhigame hetuḥ pauruṣeyam tadā vacaḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3645.

the Buddha as an omniscient religious teacher and, furthermore, that he is the only omniscient religious teacher. Therefore, only the teachings of the Buddha and not those of other religious teachers should be accepted as the true Dharma.

On the basis of Buddha's teachings of "soullessness" which he has expounded after having realized the true nature of the universe through his enlightenment, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla aim to prove that only the Buddha is an omniscient teacher. He is not prepared to accept even the immortal Hindu gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, as omniscient.

The Hindus hold these gods to be omniscient on the basis of their being the embodiment of the Vedas. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have tried to prove that there is no connection between the Vedas and these gods, because they both are eternal. They give reasoning that two eternal things cannot be related to each other, because there is no activity in them. Perhaps, they have misunderstood the meaning of the word "eternal" (nitya). In fact, "eternity", when ascribed to the gods and the Vedas , means that they are both beginningless, beyond the realm of time and beyond history. In other words, they are real; that is, they are existent before the world process. However, there is no reason why theyboth cannot be related to each other. Eternity does not necessarily imply negation of relations. There is no third principle to check the relation between the eternal gods and the eternal Vedas. On the basis of being the embodiment of the Vedas, the gods may be called omniscient.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism also, the Buddha (dharmakāya of the Buddha)

is conceived as beyond the time process and the essence of the universe,[41] and at the same time he is considered to be omniscient. In the case of the Buddha also, both his existence and his omniscience are eternal and are related to each other. The same is true in the case of the gods and the Vedas also. Though both the gods and the Vedas are accepted as eternal, yet these gods may be considered as omniscient. The Vedas mean intuitive knowledge and these gods may possess the intuitive knowledge in Samādhi. If the mortal being like the Buddha claims to have intuitive knowledge, why cannot those immortal gods also have intuitive knowledge when they have more capacity than human beings? Śāntarakṣita also has indirectly accepted this fact, because he wants to prove the immortality of the Buddha. On account of his enlightenment, the Buddha reaches the state of immortality. Thus the mortal Buddha becomes omniscient and eternal according to the Buddhists. If it is accepted, as the Buddhists do, that the Dharmakāya (cosmical body) or Sambhogakāya (the body of bliss) are immortal, then there is fundamentally no difference between the gods and these Kāyas (bodies) of the Buddha on the question of omniscience, because they are immortal.

Now the important question is whether the Nirmāṇakāya (assumed body) which is mortal, is also omniscient or not. In fact, the Buddhists claim it to be omniscient, because they have accepted the possibility of human omniscience and on that basis have claimed the Buddha ("Gautama" the Buddha) to be omniscient. Śāntarakṣita has

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[41] T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 284.

established the omniscience of the Buddha by holding that he is the only religious teacher to believe in the non-existence of a permanent soul. The mere fact that he has taught the doctrine of "soullessness" cannot prove that he is superior to these gods who believe in the existence of a permanent soul. He cannot disprove the omniscience of the gods for the simple reason that they believe in the existence of a permanent soul. There is full possibility for them to become omniscient, because the consciousness is the very nature of the soul. At the same time, one cannot deny the omniscience of the Buddha if the concept of human omniscience is accepted.

The Buddhists have accepted the omniscience and immortality of the Buddha. Now the question may arise whether the mortal Buddha (Gautama the Buddha) is omniscient or the immortal Buddha. If only the immortal Buddha is omniscient, then there is no room for human omniscience. This would go against the Buddhist view. Again, in that case, the immortal Buddha falls in the same category of gods. However, the present Buddhist doctrine of <u>Dharma</u> is based on the teachings of the mortal Buddha. Now, is it possible to establish his omniscience merely on the basis of his teachings?

In fact, no one can be proved to be omniscient on the basis of his teachings alone, because all the teachings can and have been criticized by reason. No religious or philosophical doctrine has been universally accepted as perfect. The validity of a particular religious teaching cannot be established by reason. Therefore, a person cannot be proved to be omniscient on the basis of his teachings. In fact,

reason itself is not perfect because its function is limited in scope.[42]

Thus it is natural that the arguments based on reason are also not perfect. In order to reach perfection, reason must transcend its own inherent limitation through the realization of the absolute reality embodied in an intuitive realization. Since the state of omniscience is only an intuitive state, its true nature cannot be realized in ordinary experience. It is a non-conceptual state and one cannot speak so long as this state prevails. With the very effort of articulation, the state of omniscience vanishes. Therefore, the mere teaching of a religious teacher is neither the sole nor the ultimate criterion by which to judge his omniscience. His omniscience should be judged on the basis of intuitive experience.

Thus the omniscience of the Buddha cannot be proved or disproved merely on the basis of his teachings. In order to prove his omniscience, one must become omniscient by himself. Also, the omniscience of the Buddha cannot be denied by reasoning. If the possibility of human omniscience is accepted, there is no reason why the Buddha cannot reach the state of omniscience by using the method of yoga. In other words, one cannot deny the omniscience of the Buddha by means of empirical proof.

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[42] na pratiṣṭhitatvaṁ tarkānāṁ śakyamāśrayituṁ puruṣamativairūpyāt. Śārīraka Bhāṣya, II, ii, 11.

niśrito'niyato'vyāpī saṁvṛtaḥ khedavānapi;
bālāśrayo matastarkastasyā'to viṣayo na tat.

Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, 1, 12.

CHAPTER VII

SUPERNATURAL POWERS OF AN OMNISCIENT PERSON

A. The Apprehension of the Omniscient Person

The main concern of this chapter is to answer, from the Buddhist point of view, the Mīmāṁsakas' objections regarding the apprehension of the objects by the omniscient person. The Buddhists maintain that such a person perceives all objects of the world simultaneously in a single cognitive moment.

Against this view, the Mīmāṁsakas assert that it is not possible for any person to know all the minute details of his own body. Therefore, how could one talk of knowing all the objects of the world in a single moment, since it is not possible to know them even in hundreds of years?

Even if it is accepted that the omniscient person knows all the objects of the world, the question still arises whether he apprehends them simultaneously or successively. In other words, how can the innumerable things having different forms be apprehended by a single cognition in their real forms? All these questions have been answered by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla from the Vijñānavādi Buddhist point of view.

The Buddhists hold that the omniscient person perceives the objects of the world in a single moment. Now the Mīmāṁsakas raise the question of whether he apprehends taste, odour, sound and other sense data through one sense organ or more than one sense organ.

Śāntarakṣita deals with this question in detail. He points out that the omniscient person does not apprehend the objects through sense perception. He perceives all things in a moment by mental cognition which is as good as perception. He acquires this mental cognition by meditation upon the truth regarding the real nature of all things.[1]

Further, he shows that the Mīmāṁsakas also accept the possibility of mental cognition without sense perception which takes place in the recollection of colour and other objects by memory. Furthermore, the Mīmāṁsakas also accept that there is mental cognition of objects while dreaming, although there is no interaction between sense organ and object.[2]

Again, according to Vijñānavāda Buddhism, cognition is restricted by different forms of disability (dauṣkulyavāsanā). When all notions and impressions of disability carried forward from previous births are removed, every cognition apprehends all the objects and thus it becomes all-pervasive. By this argument, Vijñānavāda Buddhism establishes its view that the omniscient person apprehends all the objects by perception through the eye and other sense organs.

The Vijñānavādins consistently maintain that since the omniscient person's mental cognition is perfect and since every trace of

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[1] samastavastusambaddhatattvābhyāsabalodgatam;
sarvajñaṁ mānasaṁ jñānaṁ mānam ekaṁ prakalpyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3381.

[2] varṇyate hi smṛtis tena rūpaśabdādigocarā;
svapne ca mānasaṁ jñānaṁ sarvārthānubhavātmakaṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3384.

disability has been removed, he is no longer subject to the restrictions of sense perception. He has complete mastery over sensory perception. In this sense, it can be said that the omniscient person perceives objects perfectly through the senses also.

Both the mind and the cognition of the omniscient person become superior by the practice of a particular yoga.[3] He attains the highest stage of wisdom by the constant practice of that yoga. Not only wisdom but other kinds of superior powers are also acquired by him due to the practice of yoga. Thus he attains that supreme wisdom which consists in the knowledge of all things. This wisdom would be imperfect while even a single thing is unknown.[4] Thus he becomes omniscient by acquiring this supreme wisdom. All the objects are clearly manifested in a single cognition at this highest stage of conception. That is why the Buddha or the omniscient person apprehends all the knowable objects by a single cognition.[5]

How can an omniscient person have direct perception of past and future things? Śāntarakṣita holds that a yogi or the omniscient person apprehends all the objects by direct perception and thereby also determines past and future things; because past and future things are related

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[3] Pañjikā, 3389, p. 887.

[4] dharmāvabodharūpā hi prajñā lakṣaṇataḥ sthitā;
ekasyāpyaparijnane sa'samāptaivā vartatate
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3413.

[5] ekajñānakṣaṇavyāptaniḥśeṣajñeyamaṇḍalaḥ;
surāsuraśiroratnabhūtaḥ siddho'tra sarvavit.
Ibid., Verse 3449.

as cause and effect respectively in the momentary flux of the things.[6]

The Sautrāntika, a school of Buddhism, does not agree with this view. Its followers hold that the omniscient person has direct perception of all things. An omniscient person or _yogī_ can perceive past and future things clearly through the power of meditation (_dhyāna_), and communion (_samādhi_). For example, in the case of a "true dream", conformity with the actual state of things is found in waking experience, though in the dream state there is no sense-contact with actual things. They say that this kind of dream perception is also a valid means of cognition, because it fulfills all the conditions of perception. It is clear, distinct and free from conceptual content. At the same time, it is in conformity with the actual state of things. In the same way, although there is no specific individuality in past and future things, the supersensuous cognition of the _yogī_, by its own power, envisages each past and future thing as manifesting a specific individuality.[7]

Not accepting this view of the Sautrāntikas, Śāntarakṣita says that the omniscient person has knowledge of supersensuous truths by the force of meditation (_dhyāna_) which directly envisages all things through

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[6] yadi vā yogasāmarthyādbhūtājātanibhaṁ sphuṭaṁ;
lingagamaniraśansam mānasam yoginām bhavet.
Ibid., Verse 3474.

[7] svātmāvabhāsa saṁvittes tat svalaksana gocaram;
spaṣṭāvabhāsa saṁvedāttacca pratyakṣam iṣyate.
Ibid., Verse 3475.

inference, without the help of the scriptures.[8]

There is no succession in the cognition of an omniscient person. The Buddhists do not admit succession in the cognition of an omniscient person, because he apprehends all the knowable objects within a single cognitive moment.[9] The cognition of an omniscient person is free from limitations. He perceives existing and non-existing things equally. There is no difference between things and their functions in the cognition of an omniscient person. He envisages all things in his cognition and not only a particular thing such as blue or yellow.[10]

If the omniscient person embraces all the objects within the orbit of a single cognition, then how can the things of the world remain unlimited? In other words, being apprehended by a single cognition of the omniscient person would the things of the world not become limited? Kamalaśīla says that this objection is not applicable either in Nirākāravijñānavāda (the view that cognitions are formless) or in Sākāravijñānavāda (the view that cognitions have forms).

Objections Answered in the Nirākāravijñānavāda

According to Nirākāravijñānavāda, the things of the world would not be limited if the omniscient person perceives all the things of the

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[8] atīndriyārthavijñānaṁ pūrvoktād anumānataḥ;
meneḥ sumatayaḥ prāhur nānyatastvāgamātkṛtāt.
Ibid., Verse 3477.

[9] ekajñānakṣaṇavyāptanihśeṣajñeyamaṇḍalaḥ;
prasādhito hi sarvajñaḥ kramo nāśriyate tataḥ.
Ibid., Verse 3627.

[10] Pañjikā, 3267, pp. 929-30.

world by a single cognition. The cognition of the omniscient person simply proves that the things are existent. That certain things are cognized by a single cognition does not mean that the things have given up their own characteristics. In other words, the things of the world would not give up their characteristics of endlessness if they are cognized by a single cognition of the omniscient person. In our normal experience we apprehend various things, like blue and yellow and so forth while appearing in a single picture by a single cognition. But they do not give up their characteristic of being many, nor do they become mixed together. The Vedānta also maintains that the function of knowledge is to apprehend the objects as such. It cannot bring any change in the nature of things.[11] The things are cognized in their real form just as they are cognized in their real form in the normal cognition of a picture. The omniscient person apprehends the existing objects of the world exactly as they exist. In fact, there is no end of the things of the world. Therefore, they appear in the cognition of an omniscient person as limitless and not as limited.[12]

When the omniscient person apprehends all the things of the world, must he not apprehend their limits also? In answer to this question, Kamalaśīla argues that the things of the world do not have real existence. The omniscient person apprehends their momentary characteristic. Everything of the world is in universal flux, and the

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[11] Śārīraka Bhāṣya 3/1/21.

[12] Pañjikā, 3627, p. 930.

omniscient person perceives this characteristic in his consciousness. It is in this sense that it has been said that the omniscient person apprehends all the things in their entirety by his single cognition.

Now, the mere fact that all the things of the world are apprehended by a single cognition of the omniscient person implies that these things are limited. To avoid this difficulty, Kamalaśīla says that according to the Nirākāravjñānavāda this objection is not applicable. In this view, there could be no actual inclusion of things in the cognition. The things are indicated by the cognition of the omniscient person merely as existing. They are limitless because they are not apprehended by the cognition. They must have limits if they are apprehended by his cognition.

How can a person be called omniscient if he does not perceive all things in his cognition according to the Nirākāravijñānavāda? Kamalaśīla says that he is omniscient by the very fact that he does not perceive things as limited. If he perceives the limitless things as limited, then he cannot be omniscient. Only that person should be called omniscient who perceives existing things as existent, and non-existing things as not existent.[13]

How can there be apprehension of things in Nirākāravijñānavāda when such cognition would not be distinguished? Again, is there no differentiation of a particular thing and its functions?

Kamalaśīla does not admit the differentiation of things and

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[13] Ibid., 3627, pp. 930–31.

their functions, because the omniscient person envisages all things simultaneously and not particular things such as blue or yellow only. The common person envisages only particular things, otherwise the common person also would be omniscient. Thus the omniscient person has formless cognition which is brought about by the power of yoga.[14] The objects that should be acquired and that should be rejected appear in his consciousness without losing their character or without any incongruity. He also has the cognition of the distinctness of the objects in his consciousness.

Thus there is no room for any objection regarding the cognition of the omniscient person in the view of Nirākāravijñānavāda Buddhism.

Objections Answered in the Sākāravijñānavāda

Similarly, no objection can be raised from the Sākāravijñānavāda (cognition with form) point of view. According to this view, when unlimited things appear in existence they manifest themselves in endless forms. Now, how can an omniscient person apprehend all these forms simultaneously? In answer to this question, Kamalaśīla says that the consciousness of the omniscient person also takes unlimited forms while perceiving the forms of the unlimited things. This possibility is proved by our normal cognitions. A single normal cognition can envisage the forms of several things.[15]

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[14]Ibid., 3627, p. 931.

[15]Ibid., 3627, p. 931.

Again, the Buddhists hold that since the forms of the things are only manifestations of consciousness they are unreal. According to this view, it would be wrong to say that one thing actually has many forms, because the forms are unreal. Either every thing may possess one real form or one thing may possess different forms. In both of these cases, it is difficult for an omniscient person to apprehend all these forms simultaneously. Actually, many forms do not belong to one thing as they are unreal. If one thing has several real forms, then the question of incompatibility between one form and the other forms may arise. The omniscient person perceives the true nature of all things, that is, both the forms and things are unreal.[16]

The omniscient person cannot be mistaken in his apprehension of external objects, because he perceives by the most valid means of cognition. In fact, according to the Sākāravijñānavāda, there is no means by which the apprehension of the things is possible. In our normal cognition only the form of a thing is apprehended. The omniscient person, however, perceives the forms of unlimited things in a single extraordinary mental cognition, because he has acquired boundless capacity of apprehension and his consciousness becomes the substratum of the cognition of all things.

The diverse forms of things do not appear in the consciousness of an omniscient person. But all the existing things as such appear in his consciousness. The capacity of the omniscient person is so great that his consciousness cannot be trammelled by envisaging all things.

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[16] *Ibid.*, 3627, p. 931.

Also, there is no incongruity in holding that the consciousness of an omniscient person apprehends the forms of unlimited things. In fact, the limitless things cannot be apprehended by normal cognition. The question regarding the number of things does not arise in the apprehension of an omniscient person. Thus the question of a limit or number of things can arise only with normal cognition.[17]

According to another view, there is no objective basis in the consciousness of the omniscient person. It is valid like a true dream, because it is in conformity with the real state of things. According to this view, it cannot be said that the things become limited when they are apprehended by the omniscient person.[18]

Further, Śāntarakṣita contends that all things can be apprehended, either simultaneously or successively depending on the will of the omniscient person. On account of the removal of all evil, he acquires this capacity so that he knows without flaw whatever he desires to know. He can know the objects either simultaneously or in succession, according to his desire, because he is the Lord.[19]

There is no incongruity even if the omniscient person perceives the things in succession. He is called omniscient because he successively

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[17]Ibid., 3627, p. 932.

[18]Ibid., 3627, p. 932.

[19]yadyadicchati boddhum vā tat tad vetti niyogataḥ;
śaktir evamvidhā tasya prahīnācaraṇo kyasau.
yugapatparipātyā vā svecchayā pratipadyate;
labdhajñānam ca sittvo hi sakṣaṇair hyadibhiḥ prabhuḥ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3628-3629.

apprehends all the knowable things which possess the nature of "four truths" (catuhsatya) through his sixteen consciousnesses (cittāih). When this successive consciousness of the omniscient person takes place he has not to wait for a single moment for perceiving all the things what to say of hundred of years.[20]

Here one question is very important: whether the omniscient person apprehends the "specific individuality" (svalakṣaṇa) of the object or only "universals" (sāmānyālakṣaṇa). Kamalaśīla quotes certain Buddhist scriptures where it is said that the cognition of a yogi (omniscient person) which is free from all impurities (anāśravam) grasps the "universal" only and not the "specific individuality".[21] Now, how can it be said that the omniscient person apprehends each and every form of all the objects unless he is a perceiver of their "specific individuality" also?

To answer this objection, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla hold that it is wrong to say that the omniscient person cannot perceive the "specific individuality" of all the objects. The omniscient person cognizes the very forms of all the objects apart from their own undiversified form.[22] They further add that it is not inconsistent to say

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[20] yadvā sodaśabhiscittaiścatuḥsatyasvābhavakam;
kramenā vetti vijñeyaṁ sarvaṁ sarvavid ityataḥ.
tatra tādṛsi vijñāne kramena bhavati prabhoḥ;
lavamātro'pi nāpekṣyaḥ kimaṅgābdaśatāvadhiḥ.
Ibid., Verses 3630-3631.

[21] Pañjikā, 3632, p. 933.

[22] svabhāvenāvibhaktena yaḥ sarvamavabudhyate;
svarūpanyeva bhāvanāṁ sarveṣāṁ so'vabudhyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3632.

that the omniscient person apprehends the "universal" and the "specific individuality" in one and the same cognition.

The very "specific individuality" of a thing is called "universal" because it appears to be of similar form in comparison to the form of things of other kinds.[23] A great yogi (omniscient person) apprehends only the "specific individuality", because his cognition is produced by the force of concentration and meditation (bhavanā).[24]

It is clear that the omniscient person perceives the "specific individuality". Therefore, it cannot be said that all the objects must become one, because the "universal" and "specific individuality" are perceived as one by a single cognition of the omniscient person. Really the omniscient person perceives the "specific individuality" and not the "universal". In fact, the "universal" is considered by the Buddhists as illusory, because it cannot be described as "that" or "not that". It is wrong to consider them as real. Actually, the omniscient person does not apprehend the "universal", because it is unreal. Even if he perceives those "universals", he would apprehend them as illusory because his consciousness itself is a valid perception and is free from conceptual content. If he apprehends the "universal" as real, his consciousness would be associated with conceptual content and error.[25]

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[23] Pañjikā, 3633, p. 933.

[24] tadgrāhakaṁ ca vijñānaṁ bhāvanābalabhāvi yat;
yogiśānām abhivyaktam tatsvalakṣaṇagocaraṁ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3634.

[25] tattvānyatvādyanirdeśyam yatparāiś ca prakalpitaṁ;
sāmānyaṁ tasya naitena grahaṇaṁ yogicetasā.
avikalpam avibhrāntaṁ tadyogiśvaramānasaṁ;
vikalpavibhramākrāntaṁ tadgrahe ca prasajyate.
Ibid., Verses 3635-3636.

The "universal" is of the nature of conceptual content. The consciousness of the omniscient person which envisages the "universal" would also be of the nature of conceptual content. In that case, his consciousness would be associated with error because the conceptual content is already false.[26] The "universal", which is said to be the essence of conceptual content, and beyond description and always in contiguity, is actually held by the Buddhists as formless.[27]

Thus Śāntarakṣita finds every reason in holding that the omniscient person perceives all things and their causes by his single extraordinary cognition.[28] He has the capacity to perceive either simultaneously or successively when he imparts his teaching, because of his illuminative consciousness.[29]

B. Omniscience and Speech

Although the possibility of the existence of an omniscient person may be accepted in theory, how can the teachings of any particular teacher regarding supersensuous truths like Dharma, Svarga

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[26] Pañjikā, 3637, p. 934.

[27] vikalpātmā ca sāmānyamavācyaṁ yat prakīrttitaṃ;
nityānugatirūpaṃ tannirūpaṃ pratipāditaṃ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3637.

[28] sahetu saphalaṁ karma jñānenālaukikena yaḥ;
samādhijena jānati sa sarvajño'padiśyate.
Ibid., Verse 3638, cf. Verse 3256.

[29] yugapatparipātyā vā jñānaṁ kāryātprakāśitāt;
sāmarthyam apī tasyāsti deśanāṁ kurute yadā.
Ibid., Verse 3640.

and Moksa carry conviction until it is proved that he is omniscient, by proper examination. In other words, as long as the Buddha is not proved to be omniscient, his teachings cannot be accepted as valid.[30]

Again, words cannot be uttered by an omniscient person while he is absorbed in the last stage of meditation, that is, the tenth stage (bhūmi). There are three possible ways of obtaining the teachings about supersensuous truths from an omniscient person: (1) Either he should speak while he is in the state of omniscience which is reached in the tenth stage (bhūmi) called Dharmameghā, or (2) he should speak after waking from the tenth Bhūmi, or (3) he should not himself impart teachings but the teachings should come forth from his surroundings while he is absorbed in meditation.

How can an omniscient person utter a word while he is in the Dharmameghā Bhūmi? In this stage his mind is completely concentrated, and he becomes one with the absolute reality.[31] Consequently, he is not able to propound any teaching or Dharma because he always stays in rapt meditation.[32]

It is also not correct to say that he could impart his teachings

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[30] yadīyāgamasatyatva siddhyai sarvajñatocyate;
no sā sarvajña sāmānya siddhimātreṇa labhyate.
Ibid., Verse 3232.

[31] daśabhūmigataścāsau sarvarāgādisaṅksaye;
śuddhasphaṭikatulyena sarvaṁ jñānenā budhyate.
Ibid., Verse 3238, cf. Daśabhūmika-Sūtra, pp. 25-26.

[32] dhyānāpannaśca sarvārthaviṣayāṁ dhāraṇāṁ dadhat;
tathā vyāptaśca sarvārthaih śakto naivopadeśane.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3239.

after waking from Samādhi. In this stage, his teachings cannot proceed without some sort of cognition. As a matter of fact, in this conceptual state there will not be any difference between an ordinary man and an omniscient person. It is also incorrect to maintain, as the Buddhist scriptures do, that the omniscient person does not teach anything because he is always absorbed in non-conceptual Samādhi and that under his supervision the teachings of Dharma are revealed in the various forms.[33] This statement of the Buddhist scriptures needs clarification. How then can we be certain whether the teachings of Dharma are propounded by an omniscient person or proceed from some other and untrustworthy sources?

Can a person impart his teachings after reaching the state of omniscience? In other words, can the Buddha impart his teachings while standing in this state? Speech is impossible during the state of omniscience, because there is no conceptual content in this state and speech is not possible without conceptual content. If the Buddha is omniscient, then he cannot speak. If he speaks, then he cannot be omniscient. Omniscience and speech cannot exist together, because they are contrary to each other. Conceptual content is the indirect cause of speech. It is impossible to speak without previous cognition and thinking. Conceptual content associated with verbal expression cannot perceive the form of objects, because it is associated with verbal

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[33] yadā copadiśed ekaṁ kiñcitsāmānyavaktṛvat;
ekadeśajñāgītaṁ tanna syāt sarvajñabhāṣitaṁ.
Ibid., Verse 3240; cf. Pañjikā, 3240, p. 843; Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, pp. 142-43.

expression. Thus omniscience is not possible during the conceptual state, because in this state the forms of objects are not perceived. As omniscience and speech are contrary to each other, the presence of one implies the absence of the other.[34]

The Buddhists (Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) have sought to prove the omniscience of the Buddha on the basis of his teachings. They claim that the Buddha is the only omniscient teacher because he has taught the true nature of all things. But the question arises how can the Buddha or an omniscient person impart his teachings in the state of omniscience when he cannot speak?

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla have answered this question by describing two different views regarding the speech of the Buddha. According to the first view, the speech of the Buddha is the expression of conceptual content. According to the second view, the Buddha speaks even without conceptualization on account of his previous impetus.[35]

The first view admits that there can be no omniscience during the conceptual state. But those who uphold this view maintain that omniscience cannot be disproved in the non-conceptual state because in that state the conceptual content, which is the cause of speech, is absent.[36] Although in the conceptual state the Buddha is not omniscient,

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[34] Pañjikā, 3358, p. 881.

[35] tadatrādi padākṣipte vaktṛtve yo'bhimanyate,
niścayam vyatirekasya parasparavirodhatah.
vikalpe sati vaktṛtvaṁ sarvajñaścavikalpataḥ;
na hyaviṣṭā bhilābhena vastu jñānena gamyate.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3359, also Pañjikā 3359, p. 882.

[36] Pañjikā, 3362, p. 882.

yet his words should be regarded as spoken by an omniscient person. His non-omniscience is removed through the attainment of the state of omniscience. Once he has reached the state of omniscience, his words are accepted as reliable. He cannot be mistaken because he has a clear knowledge of real and super-imposed objects. He apprehends the objects of conceptual content as merely super-imposed (parikalpita). His speech is the outcome of his direct apprehension of the real state of objects.[37]

The second school of Vijñānavāda Buddhists holds the view that the words proceed from the Buddha even without conceptual content. His teachings proceed under the force of the initial momentum originally imparted by his previous piety.[38] In other words, the knowledge and piety that were already in him before his omniscience continue to impel him to speak, though now there is no further conceptualization going on in his mind.

Apart from these two Buddhist views, Śāntarakṣita himself has provided a further view arguing that it is improper to say that the Buddha would not be able to impart any teaching when he is absorbed in meditation after passing through the ten states (bhūmis). The Buddhists

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[37] asarvajña praṇītatvam na caivaṃ tasya yujyate;
sarvajñatā samākṣepādataḥ saṃvādanam bhavet.
anubhūya yathā kaścid auṣṇyam paścāt prabhāṣate;
tasmād vastvavisaṃvādah tadarthānubhavodbhavāt.
tena sarvajñatā kāle hetor asyāprasiddhatā;
vyāhāra vṛttikāle tu bhavet siddhaprasādhanaṃ.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3363-3365.

[38] cakrabhramaṇayogena nirvikalpe'pi tāyini;
sambhāravegasāmarthyād deśanā sampravarttate.
Ibid., Verse 3368.

do not hold that the Buddha stands upon the tenth stage (bhūmi). In fact, the ten levels mark the development towards the attainment of the Bodhisattva stage and the state of perfect enlightenment (buddhatva) lies beyond that.[39] After reaching this state, the teaching of a person proceeds freely even from the walls without any appurtenance just as light radiates from Cintamani gems.[40] Thus the Buddha is regarded as the author of the scripture which is composed of his teachings. He is not an actual speaker but a "supervisor". Therefore, he should be taken as the final authority for Dharma. Hence his speech should be regarded as free from any conceptual content.

The second view does not seem convincing because speech is not possible without conceptual content. The view of Śāntarakṣita himself also does not seem to be reasonable either, for it is impossible for common people to receive this mystic language through walls and understand its real meaning in their own languages.

The first view, however, sounds quite convincing; that is, the teaching of the Buddha should be accepted as authoritative because he has previously reached the state of omniscience. The authority of the Vedas also is accepted by the orthodox Hindu philosophers only on the basis that the Vedic Ṛṣis have realized it in their Samādhi. The

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[39] Pañjikā, 3592.

[40] tasmindhyānasamāpanne cintāratnavad āsthite;
niścaranti yathākāmaṁ kuṭyadibhyo'pi deśanāḥ.
tābhir jijñāsitān arthān sarvān jananti mānavāḥ;
hitāni ca yathābhavyam kṣipram āsādayanti te.
Tattvasaṅgraha, Verses 3241-3242.

Buddhists also believe in *Jīvanamukti* or *Apratiṣṭhita-Nirvāṇa*. So it is possible for a person to continue his present life after the realization of the Absolute Reality. The teaching of a person who has been liberated in his life-time should be taken as authority for *Dharma*. Therefore, the teachings of the Buddha should be accepted as authoritative if he has become omniscient and has realized the ultimate truth in *Samādhi*.

So far we have considered how the Buddhists have logically refuted the Mīmāṁsakas' arguments against the concept of human omniscience in general and the Buddha's omniscience in particular. In the following chapter we propose to discuss the concept of human omniscience as understood by the Jainas.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JAINA CONCEPTION OF OMNISCIENCE

We have already seen in the preceding chapter that the Jainist and Buddhist concepts of omniscience differ. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the nature of omniscience as understood by the Jainist. Both Buddhists and Jainists believe that omniscience is the knowledge of everything, both sensuous and supersensuous. However, there is a fundamental difference between them. The Buddhists believe that the omniscient person can know everything or anything by directing his mind towards it. But omniscience as an achieved state does not preclude a return to the state of non-omniscience. In Jainism the omniscient person knows everything simultaneously at all times, waking or sleeping. Once he has reached the state of omniscience he is always in a state of omniscience.

Like the Buddhists, the Jainas do not agree with the view of the Mīmāṁsakas that the existence of an omniscient person cannot be proved by any valid means of cognition. They have refuted the arguments of the Mīmāṁsakas and have dialectically established the concept of human omniscience. For the first time the Jaina thinker, Samantabhadra, brought forth this concept of omniscience in his book entitled Āptamīmāmsā. Later on, this concept was elaborately discussed in Aṣṭasahasrī, Nyāyakumudachandra and Prameyakamalamārtaṇḍa.

The Jaina Theory of Knowledge[1]

The Jainas hold that knowledge is the essence of the soul. They further divide knowledge into two parts: first, apprehension or indeterminate cognition, in which the details of the object are not known (darśana), and second, comprehension or determinate cognition, in which details of objects are known (jnāna).

According to the Jainas, apprehension is the first stage of knowledge. That is to say, before we identify what an object is there is a prior moment in which we know there is something there, but we do not know what it is. The Jainas have divided apprehension into four kinds: first, visual apprehension (cakṣurdarśana) which is concerned only with the visual senses; second, non-visual apprehension (acakṣurdarśana) which is confined to the other four senses and the mind; third, apprehensive clairvoyance (avadhi-darśana) which is supersensuous apprehension of only material objects without the help of the senses and mind, and fourth, apprehensive omniscience (kevala-darśana) which is the perfect apprehension of supersensuous realities. The Jainas also call it natural apprehension (svabhāva-darśana).

Comprehension

The second stage of knowledge, according to the Jainas, is comprehension which gives a detailed knowledge of an object. They have divided it into five kinds: first, sensory comprehension

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[1]Mohan Lal Mehta, Jaina Philosophy, pp. 133 ff.

(mati-jñāna) which is the knowledge produced by the senses and mind; second, scriptural comprehension (śruta-jñāna) which is produced by the reading or hearing of scripture; third, clairvoyance (avadhi-jñāna) which is the limited direct apprehension of material objects in varying degrees without the help of the senses and mind; fourth, telepathy (manaḥparyāya-jñāna) which is the direct apprehension of the mental activities of another and, fifth, omniscience (kevala-jñāna) which is direct intuitive apprehension of everything, both sensuous and supersensuous. This is also called natural comprehension (svabhāva-jñāna).

Normal and Supernormal Cognition

The five kinds of comprehension fall into two groups: (1) normal cognition, and (2) supernormal cognition. Normal cognition includes sensory comprehension and scriptural comprehension which are produced through the senses and mind. Supernormal cognition includes clairvoyance, telepathy, and omniscience. All three are characterized by super-sensory perception, derived directly from the self. The Jainists hold that it is the very nature of the self to know all things simultaneously regardless of time and space. The obvious question is: "Why then is not everyone omniscient and why are there different grades of knowledge?" The Jainists' answer is that it is the veil produced by karma that obstructs the true nature and capacity of the self. Omniscience shines forth when the obstructions of karma are removed. The different grades of

knowledge are caused by the different degrees of karma covering the self. The Jainists have given the classification of five kinds of knowledge outlined above as a description of the different degrees of karma covering the self.

Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance is supernormal cognition but is confined only to those objects which have form. Only those things that have shape, colour or other forms can be apprehended by clairvoyance. Clairvoyance has different grades caused by the difference in the force of karma. Because of the variety of karmic strength in different persons, there is a difference in the scope and durability of clairvoyance. The highest type of clairvoyance is the cognition of all things possessing form. Formless things like souls are outside the category of clairvoyance.[2]

Telepathy

The mind consists of material atoms. A state of thought is simply a particular mode of the material mind. Telepathy is a psychosomatic phenomenon which involves a correspondence between mental states and their co-relative material atoms. Thus a change in our mental states would entail a co-relative change in their material counterparts. Telepathy is the direct perception of both

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[2] Ibid., pp. 144-145.

these changing states. Thus a telepathic person can directly perceive our thought patterns.

However, this *siddhi* is restricted to the level of human beings. It is possessed by someone with the necessary spiritual pre-requisites, such as an ascetic style of life and good conduct. These pre-requisites are not described as necessary for clairvoyance.[3]

Omniscience[4]

The Jainists maintain that omniscience is not acquired or super-imposed upon the *jīva*, but is its very nature. The standard analogy used by the Jainists for this is that pure water only becomes cloudy and defiled when mingled with mud. Similarly, the *jīva*, although naturally pure, becomes defiled by its association with *karma*. This is not to imply that there was any original state of purity and omniscience. Rather, the association of *jīva* with *karma* is beginningless, although this is not the natural state. The essence of the *jīva* as omniscience is naturally realized with the removal of *karma*. Thus the knowledge of the liberated soul is all-comprehensive and all-embracing and includes all variations of both sensuous and supersensuous knowledge. Thus all substances (*dravyas*) in all of their multiple traits, modes and qualities are disclosed to the liberated *jīva*. This necessarily includes a perfect knowledge

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[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

of all things at all three times. Thus omniscience for the Jainists is infinite, all-comprehensive and boundless.

Omniscience is the fulfilment and culmination of knowledge itself. It is the nature of the jīva itself when all of its defilements and obscurations have been removed to be omniscient. This is its original and pure nature and its perfect manifestation. It occurs naturally with the cessation of these karmic defilements and obscurations. An omniscient person is capable of directly cognizing all substances and their respective modes. Nothing can escape the cognition of such an omniscient person, whose knowledge is immediate undefiled and perfect.

Just as it is the nature of the seed to grow, so it is the nature of cognition to move towards omniscience, with the progressive removal of all obscuring veils such as Kleśas, etc. The natural causal effect of this progressive shedding will be omniscience. So the Jainists state: "The proof of omniscience follows from the proof of the necessity of the final consummation of the progressive development of cognition".[5]

Attainment of Omniscience

According to the Jainas, the ātman is conscious, pure and perfect. It is associated with various kinds of karmas. The karmas obstruct the various capacities of ātman and keep it tied to the

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[5]Cited by Mohan Lal Mehta, Jaina Philosophy, p. 149. From Pramāna-mīmāṁsa, I, 1, 16.

wheel of worldly existence. The ātman loses its self-luminosity due to its contact with karmic matter and possesses passions (kaṣāyas) due to the influence of avidyā. Passions attract the flow of karmic matter into the ātman. Due to the influence of passion, the ātman gives up its luminosity and falls into bondage and is called the jīva.

The ātman is intrinsically formless, but due to its connection with kaṣāya and karma it appears with form (mūrta). Thus the ātman accepts only mūrta-karma-Pudgalas, and those very karma-Pudgalas appear as karmas later on. There is an inseparable relationship between jīva and Pudgalas. They exist together. There also exist karma and kaṣāya in the jīva. The jīva takes in such Pudgalas as are capable of producing karma. These Pudgalas stick to the pradesas of the ātman and these very Pudgalas later on turn into karma.

Like Buddhism, Jainism also maintains the concept of human omniscience and holds that the aim of life is to achieve the state of omniscience and liberation. However, so long as the jīva is under the unfluence of karma the omniscience and liberation is impossible. In order to achieve the state of omniscience it is essential to stop the flux of karma and its causes into the jīva. The cessation of the influx of karma is called saṁvara. Saṁvara is divided into two kinds: (1) bhāva-saṁvara, and (2) dravyasaṁvara. In bhāva-saṁvara there is the cessation of the modifications in the form of attachment, hatred and delusion of the jīva. In dravya-saṁvara there is the checking of the actual flux of the karmic Pudgalas into the

jīva through the means of yoga.

The next step towards the attainment of omniscience and liberation is to destroy the Pudgalas which are associated with the jīva. This is possible through the destruction of karma (nirjarā). Kundakunda says: "He who is equipped with 'Saṁvara' and meditates upon the real nature of the Ātman after having cut off all his thoughts from the outside world, casts off all the dust of karman acquired by him before". He further adds: "At this stage in the progress of the Jīva towards the attainment, in him then flares up a fire of meditation which burns the auspicious and inauspicious karmas. While in meditation the ascetic should have his firm activities of consciousness diverted towards the pure nature of the Ātman". Again he continues that due to the destruction of karma (nirjarā) "the ascetic gets himself free from karmas; he becomes omniscient and omniseer, and experiences unobstructed super-sensuous external happiness. This state is called Bhāva-moksa".[6] Bhāva-moksa is the modification of the Jīva. It is the cause of the destruction of all its karmas.[7]

Omniscience and liberation are possible through the removal of three bondages, viz., perverse view (mithyā-darśana), perverse knowledge (mithyā-jñāna) and perverse conduct (mithyā-carita).[8]

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[6]Pañcāstikāya, pp. 144-151.

[7]Dravyasaṅgraha, Gāthā, p. 37.

[8]Samyog-darśana-jñāna-caritrani moksamarga ity adyasutra-samarthyat mithyā-darśana-jñāna-caritrani saṁsāramarga iti siddheḥ. Tattvartha śloka-vārtika of Vidyānandisvāmin, p. 72 (Tattvartha-sūtra, I. 1.)

"One devoid of right attitude (*darśana*) cannot have right knowledge (*jñāna*) and there cannot be rectitude of will (*caraṇa-guṇa*) without right knowledge (*jñāna*). One devoid of the rectitude of will cannot have emancipation from evil will, and one devoid of emancipation from evil will (induced by *karma*) cannot attain final emancipation."[9]

Umasvati describes the relation of right attitude, right knowledge and right conduct: "Of these, the succeeding one is not necessarily acquired on the acquisition of the preceding one. The acquisition of the preceding one, however, is of necessity there on the acquisition of the succeeding one."[10]

The Stages of Spiritual Development of an Omniscient Person

The Jainas conceive fourteen stages of spiritual development through which the soul moves from complete dependence upon *karma* to complete freedom from it, that is, the state of emniscience and liberation. They hold the possibility of omniscience and enlightenment through the means of *yoga*. So long as the *Jiva* is bound by *karma*, it can never attain complete deliverance; but they hold that there are fourteen ladders of spiritual development which lead a *Jiva* to

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[9] na'damsanam nanam nanena vine na hunti carana-guna agunissa natthi mokkho natthi amokkhassa nivvanam. *Uttaradhyāya-Sūtra*, XXVII, p. 30. Quoted by N. M. Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 149.

[10] eṣām ca pūrvasya lābhe bhajanīyam uttaraṁ uttaralābha tu niyatah purvalābhah - *Tattvārthasūtra, Bhāsya*, I. 1.

omniscience and liberation. These are the stages of the spiritual development of the aspirant. These stages are known as the states of virtue (Guṇasthānas).[11]

(i) Mithyādṛṣṭi: In the first stage the Jiva possesses wrong belief because it is under the influence of karma. A Jiva on this step may be misguided. Just as taking an intoxicating drug prevents one distinguishing white from yellow, so the Jiva on this stage is misguided and commits mistakes.

(ii) Sāsvādāna-Samyagdṛṣṭi: In the second stage the Jiva has a slight taste of right belief. In this stage, the Jiva begins to distinguish a little between what is false and what is true; from time to time he forgets and sinks into the first stage due to ignorance.

(iii) samyak-mithyādṛṣṭi (Miśra-dṛṣṭi): In the third stage the Jiva has a mixed belief. In this stage he is under indefinite conditions, one moment knowing the truth and the next doubting it. No one can remain for a long time in this mixed condition, but will either slip back to the second step or proceed onward to the fourth. In this stage one has a mixed belief.

(iv) Avirata-samyak-dṛṣṭi: In this stage the Jiva obtains true faith either through the influence of his past good karma, or by the teaching of his teacher (Gurū). Now the Jiva has right vision, but lacks spiritual strength. Its self-control is not equal to its vision. In this stage one possesses true belief but has not

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[11] Mohan Lal Mehta, Jaina Philosophy, p. 207 ff.

yet attained self-discipline.

(v) Deśa-virata or samyagdrsti: In the fifth stage the Jiva has partial self-control. It achieves right vision and capacity for partial abstinence. At this stage, too, moderate anger, deceit, pride and greed are controlled and sometimes destroyed.

(vi) Pramatta-saṁyata: In the sixth stage the passions are controlled or destroyed, and only certain negligences remain. In this stage one has complete self-discipline, although they are sometimes brought into wavering through negligence.

(vii) Apramatta-saṁyata: In the seventh stage the Jiva increases the power of meditation and lastly one is freed from all negligence.

(viii) Nivrtti-Bădara-Samparăya: In the eighth stage the Jiva increases his power of meditation by Yoga, and practises the process called Apūrva-Karana. In this stage passions are still occurring in a gross form.

(ix) Anivrtti-bădara-samparăya: In the ninth stage the Jiva makes advance up to the point of spiritual vision by the practice of the process called Anivrtti-karana. But he is haunted by the memories of passions, because the passions are still occurring in him in a gross form.

(x) Sūksama-samparăya: In the tenth stage only the subtle form of greed disturbs the Jiva from time to time. In this stage the passion occurs in a subtle form.

(xi) Upaśānta-kasāya-vītarāga-chad-mastha: In the eleventh stage the Jiva is free from passions. In this stage the Jiva can go back or go ahead of himself. In this stage one suppresses every passion but does not, yet, possess omniscience because the Jiva is still under the influence of karma.

(xii) Ksīna-kasāya-vītaraga-chad mastha: In the twelfth stage the Jiva annihilates all passions. In this stage the Jiva is free from all the four types of obscuring karmas. In this stage omniscience is not yet achieved, however.

(xiii) Sayogi-kevalin: In the thirteenth stage the Jiva possesses omniscience and engages himself in activities. It is the stage of Jīvan-mukti because the Jiva becomes a Tīrthaṅkara and obtains 'eternal wisdom, illimitable insight, everlasting happiness and unbounded prowess.' When this absolute knowledge is acquired the Tīrthaṅkara starts preaching dharma. He reaches every part of the universe and is yet contained within the body, though its only connection with it now is residence. The last part of contemplation follows when the fourteenth step is ascended, and the body disappears like burnt camphor. This is Nirvāṇa.[12]

(xiv) Ayogi-kevalin: In the fourteenth stage, all karmas are purged away and the Jiva proceeds at once to Mokṣa as a Siddha. In Moksa, the free soul dwells forever above the land called

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[12] A. B. Lathe, M. A., An Introduction to Jainism, p. 42.

Siddhaśilā, from whence it returns no more, and this is Moksa. The omniscient Jiva does not perform any activity in this stage.

According to Jainism, even liberation is not immediately followed by omniscience. Jinabhadra holds that in as much as the soul is not necessarily emancipated immediately after attaining complete and perfect knowledge, it is at once freed on the acquisition of complete and consummate discipline (saṁvara) that is, caritra.[13] According to Jainism the Jiva does not lose its individuality in the state of liberation. It remains separated from the other liberated Jivas, enjoying eternal and infinite happiness and possessing infinite consciousness, omniscience or perfect knowledge and absolute freedom.

In the Ācārānga-sūtra the liberation has been compared with a firm rock. 'The matchless sage' likes to live on alms, in spite of social disgrace; though not recognized properly by the worldly people, he stands unshakable and firm in determination like an elephant in the battle.[14] The Jainas do not believe that for the omniscience and liberation Divine-grace is essential. According to them the soul itself is the architect of his own destiny. "Their religion of self-help, without God or His Grace, is unique in the history of the world."[15] The liberation is attained through ethical

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[13] Jinabhadra, Viśesāvasyaka-Bhāsya, p. 1131.

[14] Ācāranga-Sūtra, p. 211.

[15] J. N. Sinha, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p. 277.

and moral purification. It is nothing but a ceaseless quest for purification, enlightenment and omniscience. In other words, the liberation is an eternal upward movement of the soul. After the death, the liberated soul continues up to the end of the world, called Siddhaśilā or Alokākāśa, which is absolutely void and empty. "In explanation of this upward movement of the liberated soul, it is said that the momentum of its previous actions, the removal of the forces which bound it down to the world of matter, its native upward gravity, (urdhvagaurava) will carry the soul to its destination in a trace. This movement has been likened to the upward rush in water of an empty submerged ground, originally smeared thickly with mud."[16]

Jaina's Refutation of the Mīmāṁsaka's Doctrine of Omniscience

Similar to the Buddhists, the Jainas have also refuted the views of the Mīmāṁsakas who hold the impossibility of the existence of an omniscient being. But in their case, it is done in order to substantiate the Mahāvīra as the only omniscient religious teacher. The Jaina scholar Prabhācandrācarya in his book Prameyakamalamārttaṇda refuted the theory of the Mīmāṁsakas as follows.[17]

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16 Cited in A. G. Krishna Warrier, Concept of Mukti in Advaita Vedanta, p. 178.

17 Prameva-kamala-mārtanda, pp. 255-266.

Our ordinary perceptions because of their dependence on the sense organs, cannot perceive the things of the past, or future, remote, hidden or subtle. But the perception of the omniscient person is not so conditioned by the sense organs, but rather transcends their limitations. This is possible because his perception is via his mind and not via his sense organs. It is not temporally or spatially conditioned. Rather, an omniscient person is capable of seeing all the elements of this world in a single moment. He can discern the nature of all desires and aversions without being affected by them, because of the cessation of all karmic forces in his mind. Though the omniscient person can simultaneously perceive all the constituents of this universe in all three times, this does not mean that the past or the future is perceived in the mode of the present but rather that the past is perceived as the past and the future as the future by him.

Valid Means of Cognition (Pramāṇa)

The Jainas argue contrary to the Mīmāṁsā position of Mīmāṁsakas, that omniscience has not only been realized by those who have consummated their spiritual journey, but that it is a possibility inherent in all beings. The Mahavira and other Arhats are cited as examples of the former. Whereas the Mimamsakas had argued that omniscience is not possible because of the limitations of our sense-perception, the Jainas, like the Buddhists, refuted this position

and pointed out that the pramānas: perception (pratyaksa), inference (anumāna), analogy (upamāna), presumption (arthāpatti), words or scriptures (śabda), and non-apprehension (abhāva), cannot disprove this possibility of an omniscient being.

Perception (Pratyaksa)

Perception can be divided into two primary categories: the trans-empirical and the empirical, with the former being subdivided into the incomplete or the complete, and the incomplete being subdivided into clairvoyance or telepathy. These last siddhis or yogic powers are also incapable of disproving this possibility. The complete trans-empirical perception of a Yogi is identified with the final stage of omniscience.

But what about our empirical perception? Is it able to disprove this claim? Surely our interior sensations of emotions emanating from the Jiva itself cannot disprove this claim. But what about external perception? Is it not rather the case that we confuse a present inability to perceive omniscience, with an inability to perceive it at any place or any time? That is, we unconsciously infer that because we have not yet perceived it we shall never be able to perceive it. But surely this is a species of bigotry and not at all justifiable. The actual realization of omniscience would disprove the former validity of our doubt. But, it may be argued, this is

valid only for those who have realized omniscience, not for the perception of those who have not. But surely this is similar to the former argument, which we have already dealt with, in which we unconsciously infer that because we have not yet perceived it we shall never be able to perceive it. What about our sleeping consciousness? Is it capable of disproving our claim? To answer this one has only to point to the ordinary objects of our sense experience which are not disproved by being non-perceived in our sleeping consciousness and then extend this to the possible object, to omniscience. So we can see that the perception is impotent when it comes to disproving our claim.

Inference (Anumāna)

So inference (anumāna) instead of removing our claim, does the reverse; it reinforces our claim. How is this possible? Let us examine the constituents of a valid inference; the middle term (hetu), the major term (sādhya) and their inflexible or unchanging relationship. If the usual objection is used, i.e. that we have not as yet experienced omniscience, how can we ever claim to have the first precondition for a valid inference, i.e. the middle term (hetu) which is conceived here negatively). Ratnaprabhacarya pointed to the qualifications of the Lord Vardhamana Mahavtra for establishing this middle term (hetu). These qualifications were both numerous and authoritative. His understanding was by no means

limited to an exclusive number of objects but was rather most comprehensive in its range. The usual veils or obscurations, such as the *kleśas* had all been eliminated and he had obtained the status of a teacher and an omniscient being. Also his teaching was not at all opposed to the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*). These points all substantiate the qualifications of the Mahavira for the same middle term (*hetu*) establishing his omniscience. We can see from this example how inference did not disprove his omniscience, but rather proved it. Therefore, inference cannot disprove the existence of an omniscient person.

Analogy (Upamāna)

The subject matter of analogy, i.e. correspondences and resemblances, cannot disprove the possibility of an omniscient being.

Presumption (Arthāpatti)

Presumption establishes omniscience of a person by pointing to a justification that would be absent in the other valid means of cognition (*pramāṇas*).

Words or Scripture (Śabda)

Is scripture opposed to such a possibility? We should answer this by dividing scripture into two major divisions: *apauruseya* or revealed scripture which is not 'man-made'; and scripture which is merely 'man-made'. The Jainas dispute the possibility of the former.

In dealing with the latter, the Jainas argue that only an omniscient being can reveal it in order to legitimate its authority. Any scripture which is not revealed by an omniscient being cannot be accepted as authoritative.

Non-apprehension (Abhāva)

Just as we argued previously, that because we do not perceive an omniscient person now, it does not mean that we should infer that we will not perceive him in any time or any place, so we can see that non-apprehension cannot disprove the possibility of an omniscient person. Rather as we have seen, inference substantially and conclusively proves our claim. The Jaina Agama, which satisfied the requirements as stated above for valid scripture, illustrates that the Tīrthaṅkaras and the Siddhas were all omniscient persons.

So the Jainas, in systematically disproving the Mimamsaka's position, established their own claims for the existence of an omniscient person.

A Tīrthaṅkara As the Teacher of Dharma

The Jainas have replaced the notion of God by a Tīrthaṅkara, a Jiva who has achieved the highest stage, endowed with all such attributes as we find in God: 'Omniscience, boundless vision, illimitable righteousness, infinite strength, perfect bliss, indestrictibility, existence without form, a body that is neither light nor heavy, such are the characteristics of the Siddha.' Any

person who obtains liberation by dint of personal endeavours (sādhanā) is called a Siddha or a Tīrthaṅkara. One who has broken his tie from the world and feels liberated is called Siddha.[18]

'Though Jainism denies God, it does not deny godhead'. Every liberated soul is a God. God, according to Jainism, is not free eternally, but has worked out his own freedom exactly in the same way as the others do. He is the symbol of all that is good and great, moral and virtuous. He is not in any case responsible for the destiny of the universe or the individual.

The Jainas do not believe in a God as the creator of the world. However, they conceive the omniscient person as their God. The omniscient person according to them is the highest in the series of conscious being. The Jainas do not admit a God as the creator of the universe. However, they accept an omniscient person who is the best teacher of Dharma. This omniscient person is called the Tīrthaṅkara and the Jainas call him God (Iśvara).

The teachings of the Tīrthaṅkara are known as the Jaina Vedas. Of course the Hindu Vedas, viz. the Ṛg, the Yajus, the Sāma and the Atharva are repudiated by the Jainas and are not in the Jaina Vedas. In fact, the Jaina believe that the Jaina Vedas alone are the authority for Dharma because they alone are the true teachings of God. Consequently, the teachings of an omniscient person are real and infallible. In other words, the teachings of the Tīrthaṅkara are the only authority for Dharma.

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[18] Hari Satya Bhattacharya, Reals in the Jaina Metaphysics, pp. 47-48.

The Concept of Human Omniscience in Buddhist and Jaina Schools

Although both the Buddhists and Jainas commonly accept the concept of human omniscience, yet there is a fundamental difference in their conception. The Jainas believe that the omniscient person has complete knowledge of everything at every moment. The Buddhists, however, reject the possibility of this type of knowledge in an omniscient person. The omniscience of the Buddha was not a continual knowledge of everything simultaneously as was attributed to the Jaina teacher, Vardhamāna. He was omniscient in the sense that he was able to know anything which he wanted to know. A further difference is that according to the Jainas the omniscience is not lost in the state of liberation. Buddhism claims that omniscience is lost.

Though the Buddhists and Jainas do not believe that the universe is created by God, they accept the existence of an omniscient person. This omniscient person is regarded by them as God, because he is the highest being in the universe, not in the sense of the creator of the universe but as the highest conscious being. They both agree in maintaining that omniscience is not only a possibility but every individual has the potentiality of becoming an all-knowing perfect being by a particular practice of Yoga.

Neither Jainism nor Buddhism agree with the view of Mīmāṁsā that the omniscience of a person cannot be proved by any valid means of cognition. They both argue dialectically that the valid means of cognition cannot disprove the existence of an omniscient person. On

the contrary, they prove the existence of an omniscient person by inference and verbal testimony.

Both Jainism and Buddhism, accept the grades of knowledge which reach to perfection in the state of omniscience. They both accept spiritual discipline (Yoga) as a means leading to the state of perfect knowledge i.e. omniscience. The knowledge of an omniscient person is not sensuous alone but super-sensuous.

They both hold that in the state of omniscience the hindrance of cognisable things is removed and the knowledge of the Yogī becomes unlimited. Everything of the universe is covered in the circle of omniscience and nothing remains beyond its boundary whether past, present, future, subtle, remote or hidden.

The Jainas hold that the self has unlimited knowledge because of its very nature. The knowledge of the self is veiled by Karma. When this hindrance in the way of knowledge i.e. Karma is removed, the self realizes the true nature of knowledge and that type of knowledge is omniscience. By the removal of the hindrance which lies in the way of knowledge, everything of the past, present and the future shines forth in the self which is the very nature of the self. The things which are subtle, remote and hidden are also perceived. Vijñānavāda Buddhism holds a concept of omniscience very similar to that of Jainism. They do not accept the concept of a permanent Ātman but they do accept the concept of Vijñāna which is in changing mode. The nature of Vijñāna is also pure consciousness. Omniscience

is nothing but the realization of the true nature of Vijñāna. The pure nature of Vijñāna is covered due to impressions (Vāsanā). When this impression which serves the purpose of a veil covering the knowledge is removed the real nature of Vijñāna shines forth and everything of the universe belonging to the chain of cause and effect of all the three times is clearly revealed to the consciousness of the Yogī. He perceives everything directly and clearly, even the subtle, hidden and remote objects.

In order to safeguard their claim, the Jainas criticized the Buddhist notion of omniscience as well as the omniscience of the Buddha. All schools of Indian thought are agreed that the non-liberated souls are not omniscient. So the problem of omniscience is relevant only with respect to the class of liberated souls. The Theravādin Buddhists describe the state of liberation (Nirvāṇatāgata) as akin to the extinction of the light from a lamp (the skandhas) have been extinguished. But the Mahāyānist description of nirvāṇa transcends this notion of mere extinction. Rather it is described in the Mahāyānī Buddhist texts as blissful, eternal true and good. So a person in Nirvāṇa as described by the Mahāyānī Buddhists is not devoid of existence. But the question still remains: is such a liberated person capable of being omniscient? The Jainas refute this possibility by pointing to the underlying theory of knowledge in the Buddhists. The Buddhists maintain that desire (tanhā) is the root cause of all knowledge; and together with impression (vāsanā)

it causes the origination of the apprehension of all elements (dharmas). But the Jainists emphasize the fact that both these pre-conditions for knowledge, i.e. desire (taṅhā) and impression (vāsanā), are eliminated in Nirvāṇa as the series of momentary apprehensions (santāna) is completely removed. Thus the Jainas argue to prove that the Buddhist notion of the liberated person as being omniscient does not stand up under closer scrutiny.[19]

However, the common acceptance of human omniscience by the Jainas and the Buddhists is nevertheless flavoured by their differences within this common acceptance. Both try to prove that only their religious teacher was omniscient in order to establish the infallibility of their religion. The Jaina philosopher asserts that Vardhamāna Mahāvīra was the only omniscient religious teacher, because insight and knowledge of everything were continually present in him.

Thus the concept of omniscience in Buddhism is different from the concept of omniscience in Jainism. In Jainism, the omniscient teacher is considered to have knowledge of everything in the universe at every moment. In Buddhism, the Buddha is omniscient in the sense of having the knowledge of anything sensuous or supersensuous when he wants to know it and directs his attention toward it.

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[19] Hari Satya Bhattacharya, Reals in the Jaina Metaphysics, pp. 382-383.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the preceeding chapters and to consider the conclusions that are to be drawn from this study. It is to be remembered that our purpose is not to offer a final adjudication of the validity of the Buddhist conception of omniscience. The primary concern has been to rationalize the structure and intention of this conception in the last phast of Indian Vijñānavāda Buddhism.

The present thesis in brief can be said to be an historical, comparative and critical exposition of the concept of omniscience in Indian Vijñānavāda Buddhism. It is historical because it traces the concept of omniscience right from the Vedas down to the forms of expression it takes in the earlier and later phases of Buddhism and Hinduism. It is critical because the historical approach involving comparison already presupposes a critical approach.

The main purpose, however, has been to expound the Buddhist concept of human omniscience as developed by the philosophers of later Vijñānavāda Buddhism, i.e., Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. We have made an attempt to show how these philosophers dialectically seek to establish the sole possibility of human omniscience and omniscience of the Buddha.

The later development of the Buddhist conception of omniscience did not take place in an intellectual vacuum. Its development was the

product of constant interaction and debate with other Indian religious and philosophical schools. As a consequence, it is virtually impossible to grasp the character of Buddhist conception of omniscience apart from some appreciation of the traditions against which it was reacting. For this reason we have traced this concept not simply in Buddhism, but also in the various schools of the Vedic tradition and Jainism.

Apart from the Buddhist concept of omniscience, we have also discussed the concept of omniscience as it is understood by the other schools of Indian philosophy. We have attempted to trace this concept in the Vedas, Upaniṣads and the schools of Vedānta, Sānkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, and Nyāya with special attention to the Mīmāṁsā and Jainism.

We have also attempted to trace the concept of human omniscience as understood by the Indian Buddhists through the ages. We have first outlined the Hīnayānist position in order to make a comparison with the Mahāyānist. From this point, we have concentrated on the differences between the two schools of Buddhism with regard to the concept of human omniscience and have shown why human omniscience is important to the school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Following the logic of the Mahāyānist Buddhist, the power of omniscience is necessarily connected with Buddahood.

The school of Mīmāṁsā is not prepared to accept the hypothesis of a personal omniscient being, either divine or human. They also do not entertain the idea of an all-knowing God. This school argues to prove the non-existence of an omniscient being in particular or in general. They dialectically try to prove the Vedas as the only source of knowing Dharma.

In response to the refutation of the Mīmāṁsakas by the Buddhists, we have then continued with the Buddhists' arguments in support of an omniscient person in general and the omniscience of the Buddha in particular. Further, we have discussed the concept of human omniscience as well as the omniscience of the Buddha according to the Mahāyāna Buddhism in order to prove the authority of Buddhism as true religion. Then we have provided the answers from the Buddhist point of view to the Mīmāṁsakas' objections against the concept of human omniscience and omniscience of the Buddha.

The Buddhists have offered logical arguments to support the concept of human omniscience. Again they have vigorously proved the omniscience of the Buddha using the logical method of presumption and inference.

The Buddhists maintain that omniscient person perceives all objects of the world simultaneously in a single cognitive moment. They have also shown how an omniscient person can teach dharma by dealing with the problem of omniscience and speech. The aim of the Buddhists is to prove the superiority of Buddhism among all religions, because it is based on the teachings of omniscient Buddha.

After establishing the Buddhist conception of omniscience we have traced the Jaina concept of omniscience in order to show the differences between them regarding this concept.

In this final summary it is not possible to restate all the conclusions that have been set forth in the course of the dissertation.

There are, however, three factors that must be emphasized: first, that there was a gradual development of the concept of omniscience in Indian thought; second, the concept's centrality in Indian systems of thought as a means to establish the truth and finality of the Dharma; and third, the type of positive evaluation of the Buddhist conception of human omniscience and omniscience of the Buddha that can be made from within the perspective of Indian religious thought.

Historical Development of the Concept of Omniscience

It cannot be said with certainty how and when the concept of omniscience appeared in Indian philosophy, nor which particular system was the first to develop it. The historical development is not clear and difficult to trace with respect to origins. Whether this concept originated in the course of man's realization of the Absolute reality or out of the struggle of conflicting religious sects to assert supremacy over one another is in most part, speculative. What can be said with certainty is that the concept of omniscience was essential to descriptions of God, the Vedas and man. Logical indicators suggest that the concept of omniscience arose in Indian philosophy as a consequence of the attempts to understand the conception of the enlightened person who in turn became a religious teacher.

The concept of human omniscience can be traced from the very beginning of Indian thought. Even the most ancient literature, the

Vedas, have acknowledged the extraordinary supersensuous faculty of vision.

The *Vedas* accept the concept of divine omniscience by accepting the gods as omniscient beings. They also accept human omniscience by accepting the notion that gods can make people enlightened and omniscient, for example, a *Rsi*. The *Vedas* are the earliest record of Indian thought, and they prove that both the concept of divine and human omniscience have been accepted from the very beginning.

Some *Upanisads* were written before the sixth century B.C. and some afterwards. We can trace both concepts of divine and human omniscience in the *Upanisads* also.

The discourse on the concept of omniscience can be traced from the rise of Jainism and Buddhism in the sixth century B.C. The concept of human omniscience became very important in the history of Indian thought with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the sixth century B.C. These systems emphasize the idea that liberation is possible through self-effort and not through sacrifice, devotion or the grace of god. As a result, they believe in the omniscience of human beings only, and not in any divine beings. In fact, they have accepted the one-sided development of the *Vedic* conception of omniscience by believing in the omniscience of an enlightened person.

In the second century B.C. the concept of omniscience drew the attention of Indian thinkers as a result of the Mīmāṁsā concept of *Dharma*. The school of Mīmāṁsā attempted to substantiate claims to

the superiority of their own Dharma. Its clear-cut development can be traced from the second century B.C. when the concept of omniscience drew the attention of Indian thinkers. This concern was prompted by Jaimini in his book the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra where he defined Dharma.

The concept of Dharma became very important in Indian thought during the second century B.C. when the school of Mīmāṁsā emphasized the question of the nature of Dharma. The school of Mīmāṁsā also accepts that Dharma should be based on an omniscient authority. From the second century B.C. and onward, we can trace the development of omniscience as a paramount problem in Indian thought because Dharma was considered to be based on omniscient authority.

The concept of omniscience drew the attention of Indian philosophers when the concept of Dharma was being discussed in Indian thought in the second century B.C. The Dharma should be taught by a person who knows it. The omniscient person is supposed to know everything sensuous or super-sensuous. Consequently, he is the best authority to reveal Dharma. There cannot be any doubt regarding his teachings of Dharma. The Dharma taught by an omniscient teacher is the most likely perfect in leading to the highest good, that is, liberation.

In the second century B.C. the attempt at dialectical argument to substantiate omniscient authority for Dharma begins. From the fifth century A.D. and onward, some of the major systems tried to establish this concept dialectically.

Many systems, especially the Mīmāṁsā, Buddhism and Jainism have tried to establish the concept of human omniscience by logical arguments. The systems which had accepted the omniscience of God, have not bothered to prove omniscience dialectically because the very notion of God implies omniscience of His personality.

Because of the unorthodoxy of both the Jainists and the Buddhists and their common divergence from Vedic systems of thought, they both repudiate the notion of a God as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of this universe, and thus, the notion of divine omniscience. It is important to note that even though the Mīmāṁsakas are orthodox and within the Vedic tradition, they dispute the possibility of an omniscient being which is common to all the other schools of Vedic thought. But even though the Jainas and the Buddhists deny divine omniscience, they both affirm human omniscience. It is important to differentiate the Jainas and the Buddhists, both from the Mīmāṁsakas, in the denial of both kinds of omniscience, and from the other orthodox Vedic thinkers, who affirm both divine and human omniscience.

The concept of omniscience is developed in order to explain the supersensuous religious truths specifically the Dharma. It seems that the concept of human omniscience was introduced into Indian philosophy because of the religious controversies among Heterodox (Nāstika) schools, like Jainism and Buddhism, and Orthodox (Āstika) schools, especially Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta.

In Indian thought, not only the most orthodox (Āstika) schools,

but also the heterodox (Nāstika) schools, accept the concept of omniscience either divine or human.

There is a fundamental difference between the concepts of divine omniscience and human omniscience. Divine omniscience, for instance, the omniscience of the gods, God, or the Vedas, is eternal, that is, without beginning or end. Human omniscience is not eternal. It is attained through some sort of spiritual discipline.

The believers in divine omniscience can be divided into three groups: first, those who hold the omniscience of gods, like the Vedic and Purāṇika tradition; second, those who maintain the omniscience of God like the schools of Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Yoga, Seśvara Sāṅkhya and Vedānta; third, those who hold the omniscience of the Vedas, like the school of Mīmāṁsā. The common characteristic of the three groups is the eternal nature of the omniscient object in question which is not acquired but is an original state.

The eternal Vedas have acknowledged the concept of omniscience by attributing it to the gods and certain enlightened Rsis. Thus they accept both divine and human omniscience. Inherent is the recognition of the gods' capacity to make men omniscient. The omniscience of the gods is not acquired in a similar fashion because it is rooted in their very nature. Thus omniscience is the very nature of divinity but with man it is acquired quality.

The great chief deities of Hinduism, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva

are considered to be omniscient in the Purāṇic literature. Their omniscience is related to the universal vision.

In the school of Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Vaiśeṣka, and Nyāya, both the concepts of divine and human omniscience are maintained, but these systems do not hold that the liberated soul retains omniscience. Thus, they have given the supreme place to the omniscience of God.

The Advaita Vedānta maintains both the concepts of the divine and human omniscience. This school holds that the omniscience of God is eternal and that the human beings can also attain the state of omniscience; however, this state of omniscience cannot remain in the state of liberation.

The school of Mīmāṁsā is not prepared to accept the hypothesis of a personal omniscient being. It also does not entertain the idea of an all-knowing God. It is important to recognize that even though omniscience in any being is rejected in this school, Mīmāṁsā school still recognizes omniscience, though attributing it to the Vedas in this case. The ability of the Vedas to transmit the Dharma is justified on the grounds that it is omniscient and revealed truth, because it is not uttered by man.

The Mīmāṁsā school considers the Vedas as the only source of supersensuous knowledge, i.e. Dharma, etc. This school totally rejects the possibility of omniscience in any being either divine or human. Consequently it does not hold the revelation of Dharma through any being, even through God, because the words uttered by a being may be wrong. Instead, it accepts the Vedas as omniscient and as the

revealer of the Dharma.

The believers in human omniscience can be divided into three groups: first, those who hold that omniscience can be acquired in one's life-time and is retained in the state of liberation like Jainism; second, those who hold that omniscience can be achieved in this life, like Buddhism, Advaita Vedānta, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya and Yoga, but in the state of liberation the Jiva loses its omniscience. On the one hand, Buddhism, Advaita Vedānta, Sāṅkhya and Yoga would hold that in the state of liberation the Jiva is merged into pure consciousness where there is no subject-object duality. Consequently, in the state of liberation there is no omniscience in the sense of knowing the objects of the universe, because in that state the subject-object duality does not exist. On the other hand, Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya will maintain that the Jiva will realize the original unconscious nature of the Ātman and will lose omniscience in the state of liberation. In this case, there is also no knowledge of the objects of the universe. Third, those who maintain, like the school Viśiṣṭādvaita, that the Jiva cannot attain omniscience in this life but in the state of liberation the omniscience of God reflects in the Jiva. Curiously enough this school believes that the individuality of the Jiva is not lost but rather he enjoys communion with God and shares omniscience and, more or less, other qualities also.

The Concept of Omniscience as a Means to Establish Dharma in the Major Schools of Indian Thought

The purpose of the concept of omniscience in Indian thought is to explain the revelation of Dharma. Every system of Indian thought agrees that Dharma should be revealed by an omniscient authority. Consequently, every system has given a definition of Dharma. Perhaps every system agrees on the point that Dharma is that which gives prosperity in the present life and happiness after this life. However, Indian thought differs on the point of how Dharma is revealed. For those who believe in the existence of a God, the revelation of Dharma is not a problem, because God is automatically accepted as an omniscient being. Accordingly, God Himself reveals Dharma to mankind. Those who do not accept the authority of God for Dharma have to find the revelation of Dharma either through another divine source or a human source.

The Cārvāka School does not believe in the existence of an omniscient being, nor do they believe in the existence of super-natural objects. They are purely materialistic, and, as such do not accept the idea of a creator of the universe, that is, God, nor release from the world, that is liberation. Therefore, it is natural for them not to accept the concept of omniscience at all, neither in relation to God, the Vedas or any human being.

According to the Seśvara Sāṅkhya School, God is omniscient because He is the knower of the true nature of the universe since he directs Prakṛti for cosmic evolution. Such omniscient God is authority for Dharma.

The School of Yoga holds the omniscience of God as it has been maintained by the Nyāya-Vaiseṣika, but it does not believe the omniscience of the soul, because it holds that the omniscience of God will shine in the intellect (Buddhi). Just like Jainism, the schools of Sāṅkhya and Yoga hold that in order to achieve liberation, the Yogi becomes omniscient because the omniscience of God is reflected in his intellect. It should be noted that the School of Sāṅkhya-Yoga attributes omniscience to its teacher Kapila in this sense.[1] The author of the Yoga-Sūtra holds that God is the only true teacher of Dharma. God is the teacher even of the early teachers (e.g. Brahma, etc.).

The Schools of Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya maintain the theory that God, as the creator of the universe, is omnipotent and omniscient, and take the Vedas revealed by God as the authority for Dharma. They deny that the Vedas are composed by any human being. In this system other souls also can be omniscient but not in the same sense as God. The soul of a person can become omniscient by the proper practice of Yoga. But after the attainment of liberation, the omnisient soul loses its omniscience because its omniscience is not

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[1] Saḥ Pūrveṣāmapi Guruḥ Kālenānavacchedāt, Yogasūtram, Samādhipādaḥ: 26.

permanent or identical with that of God. It is impermanent because it is an effect, that is, produced by the practice of Yoga.

Kaṇāda asserts the teachership of God. According to him the Vedas are the words of God. The Vedas are infallible because they are revealed by an infallible God. Therefore, Kaṇāda accepts the Vedas as the authority for Dharma.[2]

The school of Nyāya holds that the Vedas are the only authority for Dharma, because they are revealed by the omniscient God.[3] They hold that the infallibility of the Vedas is due to the infallibility of the Āpta. Here the word Āpta refers to God (Iśvara) who is the reciter of the Vedas. God who has directly realized Dharma is a faithful teacher of what He knows.[4]

The Mīmāṁsakas believe in the existence of supersensuous realities like soul, rebirth, Dharma, heaven and liberation. Therefore, it is a logical necessity for them to believe in omniscience in order to have supersensuous knowledge. But they do not accept omniscience in any being apart from the Vedas. Due to this belief, the Mīmāṁsakas cannot accept the idea that any being can be the knower of Dharma. Therefore, only the Vedas should be accepted as authority for Dharma because they alone contain omniscience.

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[2] Tadvacanādāmnayasya Pramāṇyam, Vaiśesika-Sūtraṁ, 2, 2, 3.

[3] Tatprāmāpyamāpnaprāmāṇyāt-Nyayasūtram, 2, 2, 68.

[4] Yathādṛṣṭasyārthasya Cikhyā payiṣayāprayukta Upadesta, ibid.

Advaita Vedānta holds both human omniscience and divine omniscience. It is true that human omniscience is not like the omniscience of God, however. The very nature of God is to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent but a man reaches the culmination of knowledge, called omniscience, through spiritual discipline. God is the revealer of Dharma because His omniscience is eternal. However, man loses his omniscience upon liberation because he must of necessity merge into ultimate reality (Brahman). The concept of human omniscience in Advaita Vedānta is not different from that in Buddhism in the sense that man may acquire omniscience in his life-time but will not retain it in the state of liberation.

In the school of non-Advaitic Vedānta, God is not only the creator but He is also omniscient. Consequently, He is the only authority for Dharma. He is the revealer of the Vedas which are the only source of Dharma: He is both the first one to see Dharma and the first to teach it.

Jainism and Buddhism seek the revelation of Dharma through human beings who have attained this divine quality of omniscience. Consequently, they accept the existence of an omniscient human being as the revealer of Dharma. This omniscient person becomes the highest being and is treated like God by Buddhists and Jainas. Although he is not the creator of the universe, he is the highest liberated being and he reveals the Dharma.

The Buddhists and the Jainas believe in the existence of an

omniscient person who should be accepted as a real teacher of Dharma on the basis of his true knowledge of the absolute Reality. They have rejected the view of the Mīmāṁsakas who hold that the Vedas could not be the work of a human being. They assert that the Vedas should be accepted as an authority only if they are taught by an omniscient being. Furthermore, the Buddhists go further and claim that the Buddha alone is truly omniscient and that only the teachings of the Buddha should be taken as authority for Dharma. The Jainas make a similar claim for the teachings of the Mahāvīra.

Evaluation of the Buddhist Conception of Human Omniscience and Omniscience of the Buddha

Omniscience could not be proved by a phenomenal mode of knowledge; it could not be disproved either. Omniscience is a transcendental state. Precisely because of that it could not be agreed or disagreed with in a factual sense. The point is that one knows omniscience by being omniscient and that others have to take for granted the words of an omniscient person.

The concept of omniscience is developed in Indian Philosophy to explain the possibility of attaining transcendental knowledge like Dharma. Indian thought accepts the concept of an omniscient and enlightened person who radiates dharma in the world. The omniscient person radiates dharma for the benefit of mankind. He radiates dharma because he has realized the truth.

According to the Buddhist thinkers the _Dharma_ should be taught by an omniscient religious teacher. Though the Buddhists have refuted the existence of a self (_ātman_) as the permanent knower of all experience, they admit indeed the existence of an omniscient person as the perceiver of all varieties of knowledge. Their main aim is to establish the existence of a human teacher who knows the _Dharma_ because of his omniscience.

Can a person not have the knowledge of _Dharma_ by himself in order to achieve liberation? Every system of Indian thought accepts the possibility of knowing the _Dharma_ by self-effort through the means of _yoga_. The Buddhists accept that a Pratyekabuddha can become omniscient and achieve liberation by his self-effort. But in this case also a teacher (_Gurū_) is needed to guide. Candrakirti holds that the _Pratyekabuddha_ is also taught by a teacher in his previous births. The Buddhists hold that the Buddha is counsellor-friend (_Kalyāṇamitra_) of mankind. This is called action of the Buddha (_Buddha-Karma_) which does not bring the Buddha into bondage by producing any result. That is why the Buddha is called supermundane (_Lokottara_) and his duty is to teach the _Dharma_. The Buddha plays the role of God revealing the _Dharma_ as a path to freedom. A _Pratyekabuddha_ is not concerned with the world and has no consideration for the suffering of the people of the world. However, a Buddha has concern for the whole world and teaches _Dharma_ for the welfare of mankind. In Hinduism God reveals the _Dharma_ due to His active grace. God performs the moral action and confers the knowledge of _Dharma_.

Indian thought has developed the concept of omniscience in order to prove the possibility of acquiring the knowledge of supersensuous realities like Dharma. The omniscient person reveals the Dharma in the world. An omniscient person can serve the purpose of a mediator by teaching Dharma because of his omniscience. Dr. T. R. V. Murti holds that a mediator is necessary to reveal the Dharma leading to the realization of the absolute Truth. In fact, the absolute Truth is not affected by being taught or not being taught. Because of his inherent limitation (i.e., mortality), a person cannot know beyond the sensuous world. Therefore, a mediator is needed to provide the knowledge of ultimate Reality. In other words, a mouthpiece is needed to declare the absolute Truth. Every religious system has maintained a mediator between the people and the ultimate Reality. The Jainas hold a Tīrthaṅkara, the Buddhists hold a Buddha, and the Hindus hold God as the mediator, because all of these have a direct realization of the ultimate Reality.

> The Tathāgata, it was pointed out before, is the principle of mediation between the Absolute that is transcendent to thought (śūnya) and phenomenal beings. The need for a mediator is felt in all absolutism; Vedānta has recourse to Iśvara, apart from Brahman, to account for the revelation of truth; in the Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda that function is performed by the Tathāgata.
>
> Śūnyatā does not need to be declared as Śūnyatā; the Real or the Truth is not constituted by our knowing or not knowing it as such.... Truth is impersonal, true for all and for all time. Prajñā or

> Śūnyatā is bhūtakoti or dharmatā, the intrinsic nature of all things; it is Tathatā -- the 'Thatness', invariable for all time "tathābhāvo' vikāritvam*.... Only a being which enjoys a sort of dual existence having one foot in phenomena and the other in the Absolute, can possibly know the Absolute and reveal it to others. A difference is therefore made between Tathatā (the Real or Absolute Truth) and Tathāgata, who knows the truth.** ...From time to time the Buddhas, out of great compassion, condescend from their exalted position to reveal the truth to all beings (gods and lowly creatures).
>
> ....The Absolute is the impersonal reality underlying all phenomena; Tathāgata is an Exalted Personality (bhagavān), a being freed of limitations and endowed with excellence. Though Śūnyatā does not necessarily imply the Tathāgata, it does not, however, lose its nature by freely manifesting itself as a Person, as God. It is the nature of the Good to 'overflow'.[5]

The omniscience of the Buddha cannot be disproved by the objections of the Mīmāṁsakas that no one can know in detail all the atoms contained in his own body, let alone the knowledge of all the little details that make up the entire universe.[6] The Mīmāṁsakas

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*Footnote No. in original source, p. 276. Tathābhāvo' vikāritvaṁ sa'daiva sthāyitā. sarvadānutpāda eva hy agnyādināṁ paranirapeksatväd akṛtrimatvät svabhāva ity ucyate. MKV. p. 265.

**Footnote No. 1 in original source, p. 277. atīta tathatā yadvat pratyutpannāpy anagatā: sarvadharmās tathā-drstās tenoktah sa Tathāgataḥ. CSV. p. 32. sarvākārāviparīta-dharma-daiśikatvena parārthasampadā tathāgatāḥ. AAA. p. 62.

[5] T. R. V. Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, pp. 276-277.

[6] Tattvasaṅgraha, Verse 3137.

have taken an example from the realm of the physical and used it as an analogy in the spiritual realm. A man can know that two items plus two items will always equal four items without having experienced every occasion when two plus two equals four.

According to the school of Mīmāṁsā the difficulties may be felt in realizing the true nature of the universe and becoming omniscient. It should be noted that this school holds that the whole universe is created from innumerable permanent atoms. Therefore, it is difficult according to this system for any human being to know all the minute details of the universe. It is no wonder that this system of thought holds that no being can reach the state of omniscience.

As far as the Absolutistic schools of thought are concerned, that is, the Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is quite possible to realize the true nature of the universe and become omniscient by realizing the absolute reality. Here the substratum of the whole world is considered to be the absolute reality and the world is created due to ignorance (Avidyā). Therefore, the Buddhists consistently maintain that it is possible to know the "true nature" of the world, that is, its unreality, by realizing the truth, the absolute, in Samādhi.

Every system of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka and Mīmāṁsā holds that the ultimate Reality of the universe can be realized by the practice of spiritual discipline (yoga). It is necessary to have intuitive realization of the ultimate Reality in

order to achieve the omniscience which leads to perfect enlightenment and liberation.

The Absolute pure consciousness is the very essence of consciousness; it is the very essence of every individual. In the realization of pure consciousness there is no entering into the Absolute consciousness. In fact, the intuitive realization of consciousness (Vijñaptimātratā) is self-realization, or the realization of one's own true nature which is identical with pure consciousness. The Buddhists hold that the realization of pure consciousness is possible through the practice of yoga and that this state of realization is the state of highest knowledge, that is the state of omniscience and enlightenment.

Because of his claim to the realization of the truth of the universe and his accuracy in evaluating man's situation, the Buddhists rightly believe that the teachings of the Buddha are the valid path to man's liberation (Nirvāṇa). An indication of this is the general acceptance of the concept of human omniscience and the omniscience of the Buddha in Buddhist thought. Omniscience is attributed to the Buddha in order to substantiate the claim that his religious teachings would not mislead, but rather would lead to prosperity in the present life and to the highest good in the life hereafter.

Omniscience, though a divine quality, can be acquired by human beings. Indian thought, therefore, opens the possibility that human beings can share the qualities of divinity by being enlightened and omniscient.

If one accepts the tradition that the Buddha broke ordinary human physical and mental limitations by the practice of yoga and became omniscient (other systems of Indian thought also acknowledge such a possibility), then the Mīmāṁsakas' argument is refuted. And if the criteria for his knowing the Dharma are his unique teachings which meet the needs of men, and the fact that no one knew them before the Buddha, the Buddhist argument, represented by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, holds. It is true that these latter claims are not obvious truths to all men; however they are to those who have become omniscient due to their enlightment. In other words, the Buddhists' propositions are based on their experience of reality or the realization of absolute truth.

The main concern of the Buddhist philosophers is not to prove the existence of a person who could know the minute details of the universe. This kind of knowledge has no value for humanity and serves no religious purpose. The purpose of religion and philosophy is to provide that knowledge which can release men from suffering and lead to the ultimate goal or the highest good of life, that is, liberation. The omniscience of a person or being is proved from this perspective. It is not important that he should know all objects. Rather, the importance of his omniscience is that he can perceive the supersensuous realities like dharma, heaven and liberation and can reveal them to humanity.

By accepting human omniscience, the Buddhists aim to prove the existence of a person who knows the true nature of Dharma. They

believe that Dharma should be based on the teachings of an omniscient teacher who knows the correct way leading to liberation. They do not admit the concept of a permanent self (Ātman) as the apprehender of consciousness. However, they do admit the possibility of an omniscient person (Sarvajña) as the cogniser of all objects of the universe. The omniscient person should be accepted as the real teacher of true Dharma because he possesses true knowledge and can never have a false idea about anything sensuous or supersensuous.

The concept of human omniscience has been used by the Buddhist to prove that Buddhism is the only "true religion" (Saddharma) because its teacher, that is, the Buddha, is an omniscient person. Furthermore, Buddhists contend that only the Buddha should be accepted as an omniscient religious teacher, because he is the only person to perceive the true nature of all things and to know about all things, both empirical and supersensuous. His knowledge cannot be contradicted by any valid means of cognition.

By setting the Buddhists' arguments in this wide context, the reason for its preoccupation with the conception of omniscience becomes clear. Every Indian system has attempted to prove that it was either taught or originated by an omniscient authority, because omniscience is a necessary prerequisite to claiming the authority to teach Dharma. For the Buddhists and Jainas, this omniscient authority was a human teacher; for the Mīmāṁsakas, the Vedas; and for the Naiyāyikas, God.

Both Buddhists and Jainas refute the concept of divine omniscience as an end attainable by the individual, yet maintain a human omniscience which is accessible by all. For the Buddhists, the Buddha has sole claim to omniscience, whereas the Jainas defend the Mahāvīra, alone, as possessor of this state. The main support for the supremacy of Buddhism over other forms of belief has been in their arguments for the Buddha as the only omniscient religious teacher and thus the only knower of Dharma.

Every system of Indian thought accepts liberation as the ultimate concern of man and as the final goal of life. How this final goal is to be obtained is agreed by all systems to be in following true Dharma. What is the true nature of Dharma and how are we to know it? Is it possible for man to know the true nature of Dharma? The answer from all Indian systems is that no man can know by himself. Therefore, it must be revealed or taught by some authority. Every religion seeks the final source of this authority. The question remains, how can we ascertain whether the final source is teaching the true Dharma? In answer to this question, the concept of omniscience appears. If the final authority is omniscient, then it implies that that authority is teaching true Dharma, because omniscience is knowledge of all sensuous and supersensuous reality and therefore omniscient authority cannot misguide man in his efforts for liberation. In Indian systems, the appeal to omniscient

authority serves to assure the believer of the truth of the Dharma. On the other hand, the believer has faith in the Dharma, precisely because it has been taught, or originated by, an omniscient authority. Because the Buddha is the final authority for Buddhism, there has been a strong religious motivation to establish his omniscience. This has been done by dialectically arguing to prove that the human omniscience is the only possible form of omniscience and that the Buddha is the only omniscient person.

The Buddhist conception of omniscience is the most impressive example of the attempt to establish the possibility of an omniscient human teacher of Dharma. Within the context of Indian thought the claim that the Buddha alone is omniscient religious teacher remains a particular faith commitment unsubstantiated within the wider horizon of Indian religious thought. But, as has been already pointed out, Indian thought accepts the possibility of transcending the limits of knowledge and of achieving the state of omniscience as a potentiality inherent in all human beings. Although this potentiality is not exclusive, but rather all-inclusive (that is, for all men), nevertheless, this should not exclude the necessity of an omniscient religious teacher to teach the true Dharma.

Saddharma nītau manayaḥ pramāṇam.[7]

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[7]Vasuvandhu, Abhidharma-Kośah, 8, 40.

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